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A DEFENCE
OF
REVELATION,
3c. 3c. 3c.

BY

ELHANAN WINCHESTER.

PRICE ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.

1796

A DEFENCE

BY V. E. L. A. T. I. O. N.

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BY

EDMUND BURKE



PRICE ONE SHILLING AND SIXPENCE.

A
DEFENCE
OF
REVELATION,
IN TEN LETTERS
TO
THOMAS PAINE;
BEING AN ANSWER TO HIS FIRST PART OF
THE AGE OF REASON.

BY ELHANAN WINCHESTER,
Author of Lectures on the Prophecies that remain to be Fulfilled,
Dialogues on the Restoration, &c. &c.

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1796.



P R E F A C E.

THE following Letters were first published in America, at the beginning of the present year; where they had gone through two editions, before they came to my hand in London, about a fortnight ago. Being persuaded that they were calculated to serve the cause of God and truth in general, I have immediately caused them to be printed here, at as low a price as I possibly could, that they might have the more general circulation.

If Christianity hath not evidence enough of its truth to support its own weight, let it fall. This sentiment is dictated by a persuasion, that the Bible is an appeal to the common sense of mankind, as well as that it contains a provision for the wants of mankind. Happy would it have been, if the Gospel had been suffered to stand on that ground upon which its Divine Founder had placed it; then there would have been no room for the greater half of the

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objections

objections which Deists now bring against it ; for it is evident, that the opposers of Christianity do not, in general, view it, as it is to be found in the New-Testament, but as it has appeared in its connection with the crooked politics of this world, with which it was never intended to be united ; for the Great Master in Israel hath said, *My kingdom is not of this world.*

It is contended therefore, that, whoever views the religion of Jesus, otherwise than as it is represented in the New-Testament, is greatly liable to mistake its nature and design.

I highly approve of the manner in which Mr. *Winchester* has treated the subject in the ensuing sheets ; for as Mr. *Paine* has asserted, that the Bible contains no account of the nature, and works of God (except in a few passages of the book of Job and in the nineteenth Psalm) Mr. *W.* has brought forward (as a sample of Scripture sentiment and language) a number of passages from the Bible, which for grandeur, sublimity, and conciseness, cannot be matched from all the writings of either ancient or modern Deists. The Bible only wants to be known, in order to be admired ; and it only wants to be understood, in order to be approved of. Not that every thing which is recorded there is to be imitated
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PREFACE.

by us; no, many things are written for our warning, that we might avoid the follies and sins which others had fallen into. 1 Cor. x. 6—12. Now these things were our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolators, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt CHRIST, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for examples; and they are written for our admonition:—Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.

If Mr. P. had recollected this passage, it would have saved him the discovery of his ignorance, in saying that there were such things written in the Bible, that it ought rather to be called the word of a demon than the word of God.

What Christian ever supposed that every word, or action, we find in the Old and New Testament, was agreeable to the will of God? And if Deists chuse to represent the matter so, they sin both against revelation

velation and common sense. But it is asked, in what sense, then, can the wicked words and actions which are related in Scripture, be called the word of God? I answer, in no other sense are they to be so called, than, as a faithful history of the weakness and wickedness of human nature, which God hath caused to be written for our warning, that we may avoid the like; and which he hath conveyed down to us, together with the purest system of morals, the most sublime discoveries of his grace in CHRIST JESUS, and the sure word of prophecy: To each of which parts of Scripture, a degree of inspiration ought to be ascribed, suitable to their different nature.

To illustrate this thought, historic truth only is required to relate facts; moral purity, to give a right rule of action; wisdom and goodness, to make known the doctrines of grace; and, divine prescience, to foretell future events. Notwithstanding the Bible is in the hand of every man, yet professing Christians have not much attended to the study of it; an ostensible reason of which has been, the wide difference of sentiment among different sects, but probably the real reason is to be sought for from the unwillingness of mankind to submit to truth, which would bring painful conviction, that their hearts are not right in the sight of God, as it is written, "Men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are
"evil;"

“evil;” but the day seems near at hand, when men must study the Scriptures, and be practically acquainted with them, in order to maintain *even* the profession of Christianity. For I apprehend that infidelity will so abound, that it will no longer be a fashionable thing even to pretend to religion; yea, I think the rising generation will be, with but small exception, *Infidels*.

I wish I may be mistaken in my judgment of the times; but sure I am, the Scriptures foretell an almost general defection from revealed truth before the second coming of CHRIST. For when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith upon the earth? In the prospect of these things, I sincerely desire,

1. That my own faith may be unshaken; that in the midst of scoffings, I may endure to the end.

2. That I may do something for the confirmation of believers, by shewing that the apostacy (which I think I foresee) is only a fulfilment of the faithful word of God, and affords a fresh ground of trust to every real Christian.

3. That I may stir up the spirit of love among all the friends of CHRIST, that the Master may not find us smiting each other, when he cometh.

And,

And, lastly, that I may so watch for his appearance, that I may be found before him without shame.

Wm. Vidler.

No. 100, Houndsditch,

Dec. 22, 1795.



LETTERS

LETTERS
ADDRESSED TO
MR. PAINE,
ON HIS BOOK, ENTITLED
THE AGE OF REASON.

LETTER I.

SIR,

I AM very sorry that I have any occasion to take up the pen against such an able writer as you are; but having devoted the principal part of my life to the study, practice, and propagation of that religion, which you are pleased to stile *Fabulous Theology*, you must not be surpris'd at my attempting to vindicate it with the zeal and affection of a lover, who has found more real pleasure therein than in all other things.

If in this great, and to me infinitely important and interesting debate, I should gain any advantage over you, who are so far my superior in writing, it will evidently appear to be owing to the goodness of my cause, and the more extensive knowledge of the Bible that I have attained beyond what you profess. If you had known the scriptures better, I am persuaded that you would never have attempted to represent them in the ridiculous light that you have done.

As your book, called *The Age of Reason*, &c. is wrote in a miscellaneous manner, I have chosen the form of letters to communicate my thoughts to you and the public upon the several subjects therein treated of.

In this first letter I shall endeavour to shew, that the ideas of the infinite wisdom, power, goodness and mercy of God, which you profess to learn from the great body of the creation, I am able to learn, even from the New Testament, which you treat with so much contempt. And I shall also, in some of these letters, prove (I hope to your satisfaction) that there is abundance more said in the Bible respecting the Deity and his works, than you are willing to allow: for in order to render that book of very little importance, you affect to represent that there is little or nothing in it respecting those subjects, except in the ninth Psalm and some chapters of the book of Job. But I am apt to think, that you would never have had the tenth part of the knowledge of the Divine perfections that you have, if you had never read the Bible; for those who are without the knowledge of that despised book appear, as far as we can learn, to be almost totally ignorant of the true God, his glorious character, and his amiable perfections.

I shall begin with your very extraordinary assertion, given out in these words, "I recollect not a single passage ascribed to the men called Apostles, that convey any idea of what God is. The only passage that occurs to me, that has any reference to the works of God, by which only his wisdom and power can be known, is related to have been spoken by Jesus Christ, as a remedy against distrustful care; '*Behold the lilies of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin.*' This however is far inferior to the allusions in Job, and in the 19th Psalm; but it is similar in idea, and the modesty of the imagery is correspondent to the modesty of the man."

How could you have forgotten that most beautiful and sublime

time passage in *Acts* xvii. 24—29, delivered by St. *Paul* to the *Athenians*?

“ God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands: neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needeth any thing, seeing he giveth to all life and breath, and all things: and hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art or man's device.” And in the beginning of his Epistle to the *Romans*, he mentions the works of creation, and observes that God may be known thereby as follows: “ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead: so that they are without excuse. Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools; and changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things, &c.” *Rom.* i. 18—23. It is a well-known and melancholy fact, that all the nations who

have had only the book of creation to read, have been gross idolators or stupid atheists; and generally extremely vicious in their morals: their horrid crimes are mentioned by *St. Paul* in the subsequent part of this chapter, and he shews, that God justly "gave them up to uncleanness, because they changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen." Ver. 24, 25.

In the book of the *Revelations*, which you call a *book of riddles*, there may be found several beautiful expressions relating to God and his works, as Chap. iv. 11. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Chap. xvi. 7. "Fear God, and give glory to him, for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters."

Chap. xix. 1. "Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God."

Ver. 5, 6. "Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great, Alleluia; for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth."

The apostle *John* in his first epistle, gives us the most beautiful idea of what God is, that can possibly be expressed or conceived."

1 *John* iv. 8. "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love."

Ver. 16. "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

And again, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Chap. i. 5.

And

And the apostle *James* gives us a number of just ideas concerning God and his perfections in his short epistle.

Chap. 1. 5. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him."

Ver. 13. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man, &c."

Ver. 17. "Every good gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

Ver. 20. "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

Ver. 27. "Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father, is this. To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

In fine, this whole epistle of *James* is one of the most excellent systems of true religion that can be written; such ideas of God, and such choice morals, such principles of genuine liberty, equality, *the rights of man*, kindness, liberality, the noblest benevolence, threatenings against tyrants and oppressors, and encouragements to those who are patient sufferers, &c. &c. of which this epistle is full, might have secured this part of sacred writ at least from the odium you have attempted to pour upon the volume at large; and especially as in this epistle there is no mention of what you call that *gloomy subject of a man dying in agony on a cross*. But finding this book in the Bible, you are determined to despise it among the rest; though had it been written by the brightest genius now on earth, it would have been applauded as a master-piece.

But above all, how could you represent my Lord and Master *Jesus Christ* in such a contemptible point of light, as you have done in the quotation above recited? I will endeavour

to clear his character a little in this respect, by citing a specimen a little more at large than you have done, of his noble discourses against distrustful care, and of the divine benevolence exercised towards all his works: And though the generality of my readers would only need that I should refer to the passages, yet as you declare, that *you keep no Bible*, I shall transcribe some texts for your conviction and instruction; for if there is any reference to the power, wisdom, and goodness of God in the only passage that occurred to you, as spoken by Jesus Christ, "Behold the lilies of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin," what is there in the following discourse? *St. Matt. vi. 25—34.*

"Therefore I say unto you, Take no (anxious) thought for your life what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye much better than they? Which of you, by taking thought, can add one cubit (or even an hair's breadth) unto this stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore, take no (anxious) thought, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek;) for your heavenly father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the

the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the (present) day is the evil thereof." And therefore we should not borrow or anticipate the troubles of the following day, for that will always make our load of grief twice as heavy as otherwise it would be.

And again in chap. x. he teaches his disciples the most excellent lessons of contentment, wisdom, innocence, fortitude, resignation, trust in God, patience, resolution, and all the genuine and patriotic virtues that ever adorned the greatest soul of the most renowned heroes. How could you have ever read that chapter without being charmed with it? It is one of the most excellent, animating, and encouraging harangues that ever was made by a general to his soldiers. All low and mean pursuits and passions are here forbidden, such as love of wealth, fame, worldly or sensual pleasure, and that most cowardly passion, the fear of man. He inspires them with that noble contempt of even life itself when it comes in competition with things of vast importance, which all true patriots feel when they boldly meet death for the good of mankind. I can hardly do justice to this most animating discourse, without reciting the whole, which would take up too much room, and if you kept a *Bible*, I should only refer you to it, with an earnest request that you would read it with serious attention; but as you do not, I will quote a few passages.

"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." Ver. 28, 29, 30, 31.

Another discourse of the same nature, delivered before a very large assembly, is recorded by St. *Luke* in chap. xii. out
of

of which I shall quote a few passages, for the reason given above.

“ And I say unto you, my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear him, who after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings; and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.” Ver. 4, 5, 6, 7.

“ And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life; what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens; for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn, and God feedeth them. How much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do this which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow; they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will ye clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, nor what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your father knoweth that ye have need of these things: But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Ver. 22—31.

I should not have recited so great a part of this excellent discourse, being so nearly like that in St. *Matt.* vi. did it not evidently

evidently appear to be delivered at another time. And perhaps this may obviate another weak objection which you make to the evangelists, because of some small difference in their expressions; for it is very possible, that where there is any considerable difference in their accounts, that they in fact relate different events, on different circumstances of the same event. And thus there is no contradiction at all, but only one mentions something which the other omitted. But make the worst of the affair, and allow for the sake of argument, that there are some few small real differences in their accounts, this would be so far from overthrowing their testimony in the main, that it would rather tend to confirm it; for it is an observation that will strike all reasonable men, that if the four evangelists were impostors, and had contrived together to forge their gospels, they would not have varied one from another in any circumstance. So that the very thing you object to them, is a full proof of their being honest men who had no design to impose upon the world.

I would not wish to weary you with quotations from the New Testament, which you appear so heartily to despise; but there is one passage where *Jesus* speaks of the boundless goodness of God, and teaches us to imitate him in so beautiful a manner, that it is well worthy of your attention, and at the same time will shew what little dependance is to be placed upon you as a writer or teacher of religion, when you so grossly misrepresent the New Testament, as though it scarcely contained a single idea respecting God, his nature, perfections, or works. The passage I allude to is that where our Saviour recommends the noblest and highest virtue, *love* or benevolence to our enemies, and enforces it from the example of our heavenly Father, in the following words. St. Matt. v. 44, 45, 46, 47, 48.

“ But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that

curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven: for he maketh his son to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them who love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect," that is, by imitating his conduct in this respect.

I believe you are the first writer against the New Testament that ever pretended its *writings* to be *chiefly controversial*: they have generally allowed it to contain the noblest and completest system of *morals* that ever was exhibited to mankind; which must evidently appear to be the case, even to the most superficial readers. I can scarcely find a chapter of controversy in the whole book: but many chapters wholly filled with the choicest morality, as St. Matt. v. vi. vii. Rom. xii. xiii. Ephes. iv. v. vi. Col. iii. iv. 1 Thess. v. Tit. ii. the whole Epistle of James. 1 Pet. ii. iii. Besides a great proportion in many other chapters.

I shall quote three or four passages as a little specimen, not for your sake only, but to shew to all my readers the amazing beauty of the New Testament in this respect.

When our Lord was on earth, he was asked by a lawyer in these words, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." See St. Matt. xxii. 36—40. St. Mark xii. 28—34. St. Luke x. 25—37.

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These passages hold forth the love of God and man as the essence of revealed practical religion, and if you know any thing of the principles of natural religion, you must know them to be essentially the same with these; why then would you reject the Bible which teaches these principles in the shortest, plainest, most comprehensive and easiest manner? Man has need to be taught his duty in the directest manner possible, for his time on earth is short; and if he must be obliged to read the great book of nature or creation through, and understand it well, in order to learn his duty to God and man, few men will ever be found to have sufficient time, abilities, or means to attain this knowledge. And if a man should spend a thousand ages in the study of the creation, he could find out nothing in practical religion more than he might learn in an hour, by reading in the Bible. Hence the inconceivable advantage of studying the scriptures, wherein our duty is so plainly revealed.

Another beautiful passage, wherein we are taught, how to conduct ourselves infallibly right towards our fellow-creatures, at all times, without the least difficulty in point of knowledge, is expressed in these words, "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets." St. Matt. vii. 12. St. Luke vi. 31. If you were to study astronomy or philosophy for a thousand ages, you could never learn a proper conduct towards your fellow-creatures more effectually, than you are taught in this short passage. Here you have a rule which is so short that it will never burden the memory, and so plain that the most simple may understand it, and so easy and pertinent, that it is impossible to mistake in the application of it. You may set the most blind and prejudiced of all judges in the chair, (I mean, *self-love*) and he will give a right verdict in this case; he will tell you how you would wish others to con-

duct themselves towards you, in all possible circumstances. If this was the only moral precept in all the New Testament, I should esteem it a truly valuable book ; but there are several hundreds more, and all worthy of our attention.

There is a passage in St. Paul's epistle to Titus, that for importance and conciseness I never expect to see exceeded. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared; teaching us, that denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Tit. ii. 11, 12.

How much here is in a little ! The favour or *grace of God*, bringing the greatest of all blessings, *salvation*, which is a complete deliverance from the love, reigning power, guilt, pollution, practice, and existence of sin, and also a final destruction of sorrow, crying, pain, death, and every evil, which are the consequences of transgression ; *to all men*, the whole human race without exception, Glorious news ! This *grace teacheth us*, a most important lesson, enough to engage us all our lives, *to deny ungodliness*, impiety and profaneness of every kind, *and worldly lusts*, such as intemperance, uncleanness, anger, envy, pride, covetousness, ambition, &c. that we should *live soberly*, this comprehends in one word all the duties we owe to ourselves, such as temperance, chastity, meekness, humility, &c. *righteously*, this one word includes all our duty towards mankind, such as doing *justly*, and loving *mercy* ; *and godly*, herein is comprehended that reverence, love, gratitude, worship, and constant obedience that we owe to our great Creator. And all this is ordered to be practised *in this present world*, for the purpose of bringing glory to the name of God, honour to religion, peace to our own minds, and happiness to society.

I shall recite one passage more out of the New Testament, containing a most beautiful comment upon the second table of the law, showing how easily all those important precepts may

be

be observed or fulfilled, by only possessing that amiable disposition, *love*, with which, true Christianity never fails to inspire the hearts of all its real possessors.

Rom. xiii. 8, 9, 10. "Owe no man any thing, but to, "love one another; for he that loveth another hath fulfilled "the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, "Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not "bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any "other commandment, it is briefly comprehend in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the "fulfilling of the law." This one paragraph is sufficient to give a candid reader a very high opinion of the excellency of the New Testament, and of the great abilities of the admirable St. *Paul*, whom you ridicule as the manufacturer of quibbles; though it is well known, that the great Longinus, in his treatise on the sublime, mentions Paul of Tarsus with much respect, as a most accomplished orator.

I must quote a very considerable part of the New Testament, if I would point out all its beauties; but enough has been said to prove that you have done it great injustice, by representing it entirely barren of any one idea of what God is, and as having but one poor reference to any of his works, and as being chiefly controversial. Our readers will judge by the specimen given, what credit is due to your many bold assertions respecting the poverty, absurdity, falsehood, obscenity cruelty, wickedness, and uncertainty of the Bible, that book which has done more good to mankind, than all the other books that ever were written; and this is to me an infallible proof of its truth and inspiration, of which I trust I shall never be ashamed.

I am with respect,

Yours, &c.

LETTER

LETTER II.

SIR,

AS I write in the form of letters, it is no great matter which part of your book I answer first, and which last; I shall therefore take up this letter in proving one of those grand and most important facts, which you refuse to believe, but of which there is the fullest possible evidence, I mean the resurrection of *Jesus* from the dead. The proof of this will greatly shorten this controversy; for if it can be fairly proved that *Jesus* arose from the dead, then it will necessarily follow, that the scriptures are true; that *Christ* is the true Messiah, the Saviour of the world; that his death was of great importance, and shall answer very valuable purposes; and in fine, that the great plan of the redemption of mankind, through the death of *Jesus* on the cross, which to you appears in such a gloomy and ridiculous light, was a plan of infinite wisdom and goodness. For nothing can be more certain, than that God would never have confirmed falsehood and deception by such an astonishing fact, as the resurrection of *Jesus* from the dead. Let this therefore be our present subject.

There are four marks of historical truth, which no falsehood ever had, or in the nature of things can have; and if the resurrection of *Jesus* bears them all, it must be true; and all the ridicule you have treated it with, will fall upon yourself.

The four infallible marks are these:

First, That the things done, or said to be done, are such as the senses of men can judge of.

Secondly, That there be a competent number of faithful witnesses of the things done, or affirmed to be done.

Thirdly, That not only histories be written, but certain outward

ward actions be performed, or certain institutions set up, in remembrance of those facts which have been done: And,

Fourthly, That such institutions commence from the very time when those things took place.

There are many true facts which have not all these marks, but nothing can be false which has them, as must appear evident to all who are capable of reflection. Now this important fact, the resurrection of *Jesus*, has all these four marks of truth: The apostle says, "That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you," &c. 1 John i. 1, 3. In what you call, *the anonymous book of the Acts*, (which by the way was evidently written by the same hand who wrote St. *Luke's* gospel) we read, that *Jesus* "shewed himself alive to his apostles by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Acts i. 3. This was long enough for them to be fully satisfied, and to have all their doubts removed: and it appears, from the accounts given, that they were as slow of belief as any of us should have been; and this, far from weakening their evidence, tends greatly to strengthen it.

And as the resurrection of *Christ* was a thing the senses of men could judge of, (for they could and did see him, hear him speak, handle him, eat and drink with him, in all which things they could not be deceived) so it also had the second mark mentioned above; for there were a competent number of witnesses to whom he appeared, sufficient to prove and authenticate the fact, even though their number should have been no greater than you are willing to allow, eight or nine persons; but St. *Paul* informs us, that *Christ* was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part were alive when he wrote.

wrote. See 1 Cor. xv. 6. And St. *Peter* says to *Cornelius* and his family, " Him God raised up the third day, and shewed him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before of God, even us, who did eat and drink with him after he arose from the dead." Acts x. 40, 41.

The witnesses were sufficient to authenticate the fact; and by the same rule that you can overthrow the testimony of so many hundreds, you might that of as many thousands or millions.

The resurrection of *Christ* has the third mark of truth; there were not only histories written of the great event, by those who were eye-witnesses, but there is a perpetual observance of a particular day every week in remembrance of *Christ's* rising from the dead; and most Christian nations have yearly observed the feast of Easter for the same purpose. And we are sure that this great fact has the fourth mark of truth, for the weekly observation of that day on which *Jesus* rose, commenced from the very time, and has been observed without intermission ever since.

There are a number of historical facts, that have these four marks of truth, and they are all undoubtedly true; as the beheading of king Charles the first: this was a thing that the senses of men could judge of; it was done openly in the face of the world; histories have been written of it, which, though they vary in some circumstances, agree in the main; and an institution is kept up in remembrance of it, even the observation of a fast upon the 30th of January; and this commenced within about twelve years from the time the fact was done, while many were still alive who beheld it with their own eyes.

The restoration of king Charles the second, was another fact of the same nature: the eyes of men could see him when he landed upon the English shore; their ears could hear the acclamations of the multitudes; he came publicly into the kingdom;

kingdom; an institution is to this day kept up in remembrance of his restoration, even the observation of May 29; and this commenced from the very time when the event took place. The facts of the revolution in England, in the time of king William the third, the independence of America, and the late revolution in France, are all facts of the same kind: they were facts that the senses of men could certainly judge of; they were done openly; there are institutions, or the observation of certain days in remembrance of them; and those institutions commenced from the very time when those things took place. Now if you can overthrow the truth of the resurrection of Jesus, which has all these infallible marks of truth, I can, by the same rule, destroy the evidence of every historical fact that has ever taken place since time began. The great and learned Dr. *Priestly*, in his sermon on the resurrection of *Christ* (which I would highly recommend to your perusal) observes, That we have much more evidence of that great event, than of any other that ever took place. For it was not only made so plain to the first witnesses of it, that they could not be deceived themselves, but their characters, and the persecutions they were exposed to and suffered on account of their testimony, forbids every idea or possibility of their being impostors. The fact was as fully investigated for nearly three hundred years as it was possible it should be, while it was fresh; and the opposers of it had all the possible power, policy, malice, and every advantage to have the falsehood of it detected; which if it could have been done, would certainly have been done then; and which detection would immediately have ruined the cause of Christianity for ever. But instead of this being the case, the long and severe trial ended in the conviction of the greater part of the inhabitants of the vast Roman empire, and their free and hearty acknowledgment of the truth of the fact, contrary to all their most inveterate prejudices,

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judices. This is no inconsiderable argument in favour of the certainty of this important event; for what but the amazing power of truth could possibly have wrought so great an effect?

For my own part, I think that the existence of Christianity in the world is a full and infallible proof that *Jesus* rose from the dead; which if he had not done, we should scarce ever have heard of him; and his religion could not have existed a year, nor scarcely a week; for the whole depended on his rising from the dead, according to his predictions so frequently delivered to his disciples. For had he failed in that point, none would have ever trusted in him, nor propagated his doctrine in the world; and I am confident that we at this distance of time should never have heard of him.

I had an opportunity when in London, of illustrating this, by an example worthy of notice.—One evening I thus addressed my audience:

“To prove that you would never have heard of *Jesus*, if he had not actually risen from the dead, according to his predictions, I will mention an affair that happened in your own city, and since the beginning of the present century.

“There was a new sect arose about that time, who prophesied and declared that their religion would spread over the whole world in a short time; and in proof of these assertions, gave this sign, That *Dr. Eames*, one of their brethren, who was buried on the 25th of December, should, on the 25th of the next May, five months from the time of his burial, between the hours of twelve and six in the afternoon, rise from the dead, burst open his grave, and walk home to his house publicly through the streets of London. And this prediction they published before hand, as a sign, to which they invited the attention of the people; and they said, ‘If this wonder takes place, of which we are fully assured, it will be certainly known that we are the Lord’s people.’ Accordingly on the day,

day, vast numbers flocked to the place where this man was buried, and waited to see him rise, but in vain, for he rose not. The consequence of which was, that the sect immediately fell into contempt, and came to nothing, and Dr. *Eames* was soon forgotten; so that I suppose few of you ever heard of his name. And this would certainly have been the case with *Jesus* and his religion, if he had not truly have risen from the dead."

And I had the satisfaction of learning from a number of my hearers, that they had never heard of Dr. *Eames*, until that evening; although he lived, died, and was buried in their city. Thus it appears to me to be proved beyond all contradiction, that *Christ Jesus* actually rose from the dead. And this fact being true, it will necessarily follow, That the Christian system, which is so *little*, weak, and ridiculous in your esteem, is truly a plan of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness; worthy of the acceptance of all mankind.

This subject is the more important, because this is the turning point between Deists and Christians; here we divide: for if the doctrine of *Christ's* resurrection can be overthrown, then is Christianity a fable; but if it be fairly proved, then the Christian system can be easily maintained against Deism. Here I am willing to rest the merits of the cause, being fully persuaded that the ground is good.

I am, Sir,

Yours, &c.

LETTER III.

SIR,

WHAT you have advanced in your book against the ascension of our Saviour *Jesus Christ*, appeared to me on reading so weak, vague, inconclusive, and so little to the purpose, that I thought at first not to take any notice of it: but lest any should imagine from my not noticing it, that what you had written upon that subject was unanswerable, I concluded upon second thoughts to make some observations upon that important fact.

You, disregarding all facts that do not suit your hypothesis, though ever so well attested, undertake to represent the resurrection and ascension as fictions, told with the "most wretched contrivance" so as to "exceed every thing that went before." But as I have already proved the resurrection to be certainly true, there is but little difficulty in proving the ascension also.

You suppose the resurrection and ascension of *Jesus* not to be true, because all the inhabitants of Jerusalem did not see him arise, and behold him ascend. You say, "The resurrection and ascension, supposing them to have taken place, admitted of public and ocular demonstration, like that of the ascension of a balloon, or the sun at noon-day, to all Jerusalem at the least. A thing which every body is required to believe, requires that the proof and evidence of it should be equal to all, and universal; and as the public visibility of this last related act was the only evidence that could give sanction to the former part, the whole of it falls to the ground, because the evidence never was given. Instead of this, a small number of persons, not more than eight or nine, are introduced as proxies for the whole world, to say, *they saw it*, and all the rest of the world

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are called upon to believe it." Thus you write, and further declare, that you will not believe without ocular and manual demonstration yourself, &c. How unreasonable and impossible is this! Would you have *Christ* to be continually dying, rising, and ascending, before the eyes of every individual, in order that all should have equal evidence of these great facts? Is there no possibility of evidence being so authenticated, and facts so proved, as may warrant the safety of believing them, even to those who in the nature of things could not have seen them with their own eyes? If not, human nature is in a most deplorable situation indeed! The death, resurrection, and ascension of *Christ* could happen but once, and therefore but a small part of the human race could see those facts with their own eyes, and if all the people alive at once were to see them, they must be proxies for other generations: some must of necessity give credit to them from the reports of others. And therefore a few honest upright men, being eye-witnesses of a fact, are as capable of authenticating that fact, and their evidence is as valid, as though millions had beheld it with them.

There was a reason why Jerusalem as a city was not allowed to behold *Christ* after his resurrection, and to see him ascend: for the inhabitants of that unhappy city had, by their rejection of him and his doctrine, moved him to say, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her children under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." Matt. xxiii. 37—39. Luke xiii. 34, 35.

Now if the whole city had seen him after his resurrection, and beheld him ascend, this prophecy of our saviour would have been null, void, and of none effect; and then you would have
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had some real ground for objection against Christianity; whereas now it does not appear that you have any, but what you frame out of your own heart. It was therefore of a million times more consequence that our Lord's words should be all fulfilled, than that you or I should have had our humour pleased, or all Jerusalem should be gratified with that sight, of which the inhabitants in general had rendered themselves unworthy, by their wilfully rejecting the highest moral and even miraculous evidence of the Messiah's mission.

But though *Christ* himself was not seen by the inhabitants of Jerusalem in general, after the resurrection, yet St. *Matthew* informs us in his gospel, That "the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, (by which is meant Jerusalem) and appeared unto many." Chap xxvii. 52, 53. So all these were witnesses of *Christ's* resurrection; and by them, great proof was given to the citizens in general of the reality of the fact. And as for *Christ* himself, he remained on earth forty days after his resurrection, and shewed himself many times to his disciples and followers, and at one time to more than five hundred at once; which surely were enough in all reason to authenticate any fact. And when he was going to ascend, he assembled his followers at Jerusalem, and commanded them not to depart from the city till they received the Holy Ghost in a miraculous manner, which should inspire them with the gift of tongues, &c. and which would testify that he had entered heaven, and be as full a proof to all that should see this sign, that he had actually ascended, as though they had seen him go up with their own eyes, if not more so. After he had discoursed with them in a friendly manner for some time, he led them out of the city as far as to Bethany, or the mount of Olives, which is near two miles distant, on the east of Jerusalem; this was doubtless early in
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the morning, (as he rose early in the morning from the grave, while the inhabitants of great cities are generally in their beds, locked up in their sleep. And if any of them were up, as they had not the least intimation of what was going forward, it is not in the least probable that they should turn their attention towards the mount of Olives, but on the contrary it is likely they would attend to their business; as the earliest risers in cities are generally the most industrious. When *Christ* had led his disciples as far as this favoured place, (to which he shall descend when he comes again, see *Zech.* xiv. 4, 5.) "he lifted up his hands and blessed them; and it came to pass while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and a cloud received him out of their sight and he was carried up into heaven. And while they looked stedfastly towards heaven as he went up, behold, two men, (or angels in the form of men) stood by them in white apparel; who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same *Jesus*, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven," See St. *Luke* xxiv. 50, 51. *Acts* i. 4—11.

After beholding this glorious sight, on a beautiful morning in the month of May, the disciples of our Lord returned to Jerusalem, to wait for the fulfilment of his promise, the gift of his Holy Ghost. How many the company consisted of that beheld him ascend, we are not positively told, but as if on purpose to confute your scoffing sneer of *a small number of persons, not more than eight or nine, introduced as proxies for the whole world, to say they saw it*; &c. the sacred historian informs us, that "the number of the names together were about an hundred and twenty." *Acts* i. 15. These all having beheld their Lord ascend, agreed to continue daily together, waiting for his promise, spending the time in prayer and other religious exercises. Probably many more saw him ascend, but all these certainly,

certainly, because they continued together, waiting for the accomplishment of what *Christ* had promised them at the time of his ascension.

How different this story appears to me from what it does to you? To you it appears *in vain to attempt to palliate or disguise this matter*: to me it appears so evidently true and reasonable, as to stand in no need of any palliation whatever. To you, *the story as far as relates to the supernatural part, has every mark of fraud and imposition stamped upon the face of it*: to me, it appears to have every mark of truth that could be desired. I think, and I trust I can prove it to be a true story, and it is evidently told in a very artless natural manner.

Jesus is related to have predicted his sufferings and resurrection beforehand, at various times, that the scene might become common and familiar to his disciples. Then his death is set forth in the most particular manner, with a vast variety of circumstances, in which a great number of prophecies written many hundreds of years before were exactly accomplished. His burial is then related with the peculiar circumstances attending it. The guards placed at the door of the sepulchre, and for what purpose, at whose request, and by whose order. Then follows the history of the resurrection of *Jesus*, with many infallible proofs of the same. Many interviews between *Christ* and his disciples, and several conversations upon the subject are set down. Ten or eleven distinct appearances of *Christ* are recorded. Forty days he is said to have remained on earth, to instruct and confirm his disciples, and fully to satisfy them of the reality of his resurrection. During this time there seems to have been one general meeting of all his followers and friends, to the number of above five hundred; which it is probable was held by appointment, upon a mountain in Galilee, and was notified before-hand, soon after his resurrection: "He goeth before you into Galilee; there shall
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ye see him, as he said unto you." St. Mark xvi. 7. Then after various other interviews, with some of his disciples, a general gathering of them took place at Jerusalem, for the purpose of beholding his ascension; there he conversed with them freely, gave them his last instructions, promised them the gift of the Spirit in a miraculous manner; ordered them to abide at Jerusalem till that sign was fulfilled; then he led them out of the city to the mount of Olives, and arriving at its summit, probably before the rising of the sun, he lifted up his hands, and gave them a parting blessing; in the action of which, he was parted from them, and ascending a little way in their open view; but in a short time, a cloud received him out of their sight, and they saw him no more. Then bowing their knees, they worshipped him, being now fully convinced of his glorious character; then returning with great joy to Jerusalem, about an hundred and twenty of them continued daily together, waiting for the descent of the Holy Ghost. Now what is there in all this, that has the least appearance of fraud or imposition? I never heard a story in all my life, told more naturally, or in which all the parts better corresponded with each other. But the great and infallible proof of its truth is yet behind; I mean that part of it which relates to the ascension of *Jesus*; for as to his resurrection from the dead, I have demonstrated the truth of that in a former letter.

On the feast of Pentecost, which was fifty days from the Sabbath that was in the seven days of the feast of unleavened bread, and consequently ten days after our Saviour's ascension, as the disciples were all with one accord in one place, "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them: and they were all filled with the
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Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance." Acts ii. 1—4.

Here was a miracle as great and wonderful as the ascension of *Christ*, and which fully proved that fact; and this was evident to the senses, not only of those who were the immediate subjects of it, but to all the nation of the Jews, then assembled to keep the feast of Pentecost. Here was no possibility of deception or imposture, the Jews that assembled upon this occasion, had been many of them born and brought up among all the nations then known, and perfectly understood the several languages of the world, and therefore would certainly tell whether the apostles spoke them with propriety: which if they did, the miracle was as evident as the sun shining in his strength at noon-day, and was as plainly the immediate work of God, as the creation of the world itself. For that a number of ignorant illiterate Galileans, the least improved of any of the Jews, should at once be capable of speaking fluently and correctly all the different tongues spoken by the most polished as well as rudest nations, which they could not have learned in many hundreds of years, must have been as impossible for them to do without the highest inspiration, as to create another universe, and fill it with inhabitants. And this amazing wonder being fully shewn in the presence of all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and many thousands of Jews out of all nations, was a proof of *Christ's* ascension, far more full and satisfactory, than if they had seen him go up with their own eyes. There can be no room here for debating, to what extent the laws of nature, and the powers of nature and art could possibly go; for every person of *common sense* must know, that for ignorant men in a moment to learn to speak all languages, is absolutely naturally impossible, unless by immediate inspiration. And this event took place, not in an obscure corner of the world, but in the famous city of Jerusalem; not in a

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private conventicle, but in the public temple, the place of general resort; not only before a few persons, but in the sight and hearing of many thousands; not only before an ignorant rabble, but in the presence of the most devout, learned, and judicious of the nation of the Jews, gathered out of all nations under heaven: not in the night, but in the morning of a public feast day. And this miracle of the gift of tongues, was not only a sign for a day, but lasted many years; whereby it became as publicly and universally notorious as any thing could be. And it not only came upon the apostles themselves, but in general upon the first converts to christianity; not among the Jews only, but the Gentiles also.

This plain state of facts, not only infallibly proves the ascension of *Christ* to be certain, as this sign took place in confirmation thereof, which it could not if it had not been true; but being open, and continuing so long, seemed to give almost precisely, that general evidence which you seem to require. For here was a fact continued for a long time, before many nations and people, in proof of *Christ's* ascension into heaven; which was itself as great a miracle, and for the extent of it far greater, and capable of being more abundantly investigated, than the ascension itself could be.

If you had considered this matter with any proper attention, you might have spared yourself the labour of asking, and the mortification of betraying your amazing ignorance of the subject on which you have written, in asking, "But how was *Jesus Christ* to make any thing known to all nations? He could speak but one language, which was Hebrew; and there are in the world several hundred languages. Scarce any two nations speak the same language, or understand each other; and as to translations, every man who knows any thing of languages, knows that it is impossible to translate from one language into another, not only without losing a great part of the original,

original, but frequently of mistaking the sense. It is always necessary, that the means that are to accomplish any end, be equal to the accomplishment of that end, or the end cannot be accomplished. It is in this that the difference between finite and infinite power and wisdom discovers itself. Man frequently fails in accomplishing his end, from a natural inability of power to the purpose, and frequently from the want of wisdom to apply power properly. But it is impossible for infinite wisdom to fail as man faileth. The means it useth are always equal to the end."

Thus you write, as though you never read of the gift of tongues, that great and most evident miracle that was ever exhibited: and which was a mean fully adequate to the great purposes of making known the truth to all nations, without the difficulty or uncertainty of translations, mistakes or misapprehensions. But how came you, my friend, to suppose that *Christ* himself could only speak one language, which was Hebrew? The Hebrew language, as far as I can learn, was never spoken at all by the common people as a living language, after the Babylonish captivity; but Syriac, and even Greek was more generally used. But whatever was the language, or languages spoken at that time, our Saviour excelled, both in matter and manner, all the orators of his age and nation.

"The people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes." Matt. vii. 28, 29.

"The common people heard him gladly." Mark xii. 37.

The officers that were sent to take him, were so charmed with his language and sentiments, that they came without him, and being asked by their rulers, "Why have ye not brought him?" returned this short, but pertinent answer, "Never man spake like this man." John vii. 45, 46.

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And when he once spake in Nazareth, "all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." Luke iv. 22.

And at another time, those who heard him, exclaimed, "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" John vii. 15.

You seem to take great pleasure in making *Jesus* appear mean and contemptible upon every occasion. His images, according to your ideas of him, were low, his stile mean; he could speak but one language; and you even go so far as to say, *And the probability is, that he could not write*; though St. John, who was rather better acquainted with him than you are, informs us on a certain occasion, that he "stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground, as though he heard them not. And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground." John viii. 6, 8. which makes it to me *more than probable*, that he could write.

The apostles and first Christians being qualified by having the gift of tongues, and the power of working miracles in the name of *Jesus*, were well prepared to teach all nations, and to be witnesses of the death, resurrection, and ascension of *Jesus*, both in Judea, Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth. The astonishing miracle of curing a man of above forty years old, that was lame from his mother's womb, and had never walked, and who was laid daily at the beautiful gate of the temple, to ask alms of the people, by which his face was become familiar to the whole nation, was so notorious, that even the Sadducees, the infidels of that age, the rulers of the people, said in conference among themselves, "What shall we do to these men? For that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest unto all them that dwell at Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it: but, that it spread no farther
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among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak to no man in this name." Acts iv. 16, 17.

These great events, the gift of tongues, and the power of working miracles, were worthy of the infinite wisdom, power, and goodness of God, and they accomplished the great design of God; for the first day, three thousand souls were added to the Christian society, and soon after the number was about five thousand, and in a short time, we read, "And the word of God increased; and the number of disciples were multiplied in Jerusalem greatly, and a great number of the priests were obedient to the faith." See Acts ii. 41, 47. iv. 4, 21. v. 14. vi. 7. xi. 31. xxi. 20. Thus many thousands of those same Jews who had been witnesses of *Christ's* sufferings on the cross, within a few weeks after, came to be professors of his religion; which event could not have happened, unless the evidences of his resurrection and ascension had been the most powerful that could have been desired.

I have before proved that *Christ* arose; if he arose, he also ascended, for he is not now on the earth; though I and many others expect him soon to return again. The ascension was a thing that the senses of men could judge of; it took place in the sight of at least an hundred and twenty of his followers; the Holy Ghost descended in a perceptible, visible, miraculous manner, and inspired them with the gift of tongues, and gave them them the power of working miracles; and these things happened in such a way as to give the fullest evidence of the truth of the fact. I am sure that I need not add any more upon so plain a subject.

I am, Sir,

Yours, &c.

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LETTER IV.

SIR,

YOU have been a little unfortunate in your choice of the xixth Psalm, as a pure piece of *Deism*, in which you declare that there is not the least allusion to any other book, but the great book of the creation, for the fact, unfortunately for your cause, is, that though there is in this elegant composition, at the beginning of it, a charming allusion to the great book of creation, yet the latter part of it is taken up in recommending that book of revelation, the law of the Lord, which you declare is more like the word of a demon than of God, and that there is scarcely any thing in it which does not merit hatred or contempt. You will soon perceive that the writer of that ancient piece of *Deism*, thought very different from you; but as you remember not the prose and keep no Bible, I will transcribe a part of it for your perusal, and that all may see how totally unfit you are to write against a book, the contents of which you are so little acquainted with.

Psalm xix. 1—11. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. There is no speech, nor language where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun: which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof." Thus far *David*, who was the writer of this Psalm, alludes to the great book of creation: but he immediately adds, "The law

law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of The Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward. Here is much said in favour of the law of God; and its amazing uses are described as no Deist of the present age would describe them. Much more advantage is here stated to result from the study of the law, testimony, statutes, commandment and judgments of the Lord, than from the study of the great book of creation; by these the soul is *converted, the simple is made wise, the heart is made to rejoice, the eyes are enlightened*, none of which great effects are ascribed to beholding the works of creation. Wherefore the choice you have made of this Psalm is very much against you, especially as you have so boldly declared, that there was not the least allusion therein to any other book but that of the creation. But the public after reading this specimen, will be able to judge for themselves, what credit is due to a writer who undertakes to investigate *Theology*, without having even a Bible in his possession, and appears to be so ignorant of its contents.

How could you ever get the strange and mistaken idea into your head, that there is scarcely the least allusion to the works of God, except in some chapters of Job, and the 19th Psalm, when the scriptures so much abound with them, that if I should transcribe them all I should fill a volume, and be obliged to write out more than a thousand verses? But however your assertions may go down with the ignorant, who have never spent much time in reading the Bible, they appear to all who are acquainted

acquainted with the sacred pages, just as false, ignorant, and absurd, as an assertion, That there was not above twenty stars in all the sky, and that none of those could possibly be bigger than eggs, would to the most learned and judicious astronomers.

I shall here proceed to quote a few, out of vast numbers of passages, where the works of creation are mentioned and celebrated :

Psalms viii. 1, 3—9. “O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! thou hast set thy glory above the heavens, When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers; the moon and stars which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him; For thou madest him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the work of thy hands: thou hast put all things under his feet; all sheep and oxen; yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fishes of the sea, and whatsoever passeth thro’ the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!”

Psalms xxiv. 1, 2. “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.”

Psalms xxxiii. 4—9. “For the word of the Lord is right, and all his works are done in truth. He loveth righteousness and judgment; the earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them with the breath of his mouth. He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in store-houses. Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him: For he spake, and it was done: he commanded and it stood fast.”

Psalms lxxv. 6—13. “Who by his strength setteth fast the
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mountains, being girded with power: Who stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people: They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid of thy tokens; thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice; thou visitest the earth, and waterest it; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water; thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it; thou waterest the ridges abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof; thou makest it soft with showers; thou blessest the springing thereof; thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness; and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks, the vallies also are covered over with corn: they shout for joy, they also sing."

Psalms xcv. 3, 4, 5, 6. "For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all Gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth; the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it; and his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship, and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our Maker."

Psalms c. 3. "Know ye that the Lord he is God; it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture."

Psalms cii. 25, 26, 27. "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment, as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."

Psalms civ. is exactly such a Psalm as you represented the 19th to be; it is wholly filled up with the great works of creation and providence, and would have been far more fit for

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your purpose than the 19th Psalm; but as it is about three times as long as that is, I must only quote a little specimen.

Ver. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31. "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches: so is this great and wide sea, wherein are creeping things innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships; there is that leviathan whom thou hast made to play therein. These wait all upon thee, that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good; thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust; thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth. The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in his works."

Psalm cxxxvi. 1, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 25. "O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. To him who alone doth great wonders, &c. To him that by wisdom made the heavens, &c. To him that stretched out the earth above the waters, &c. To him that made great lights, &c. The sun to rule by day, &c. The moon and stars to rule by night, &c. Who giveth food to all flesh; for his mercy endureth for ever."

Psalm cxlv. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 16, 17. "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works. And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness. They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness. The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all; and his

tender mercies are over all his works. All thy works shall praise thee, and thy saints shall bless thee. The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works."

Psalms cxlvi. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. "Happy is he that hath the God of *Jacob* for his help; whose hope is in the Lord his God; who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that therein is; who keepeth truth for ever; who executeth judgment for the oppressed; who giveth food to the hungry. The Lord looseth the prisoners. The Lord openeth the eyes of the blind: the Lord raiseth them that are bowed down: the Lord loveth the righteous. The Lord preserveth the stranger; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down."

Psalms cxlvii. 4, 5, 8, 9, 16, 17, 18. "He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names. Great is our Lord, and of great power, his understanding is infinite: who covereth the heavens with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens who cry. He giveth snow like wool, he scattereth the hoar frost like ashes. He casteth forth his ice like morsels: Who can stand before his cold? He sendeth out his word and melteth them: he causeth the winds to blow, and the waters flow."

Psalms cxlviii. 1—13. "Praise ye the Lord. Praise ye the Lord from the heavens: praise him in the heights. Praise ye him all his angels: praise ye him all his hosts. Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him all ye stars of light. Praise him ye heavens of heavens; and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord: for he commanded, and they were created. He hath also established them

them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass. Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps; fire, and hail; snow, and vapour: stormy wind fulfilling his word: mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars; beasts and all cattle: creeping things, and flying fowl; kings of the earth, and all people: princes, and all judges of the earth: both young men and maidens; old men and children: let them praise the name of the Lord; for his name alone is excellent: his glory is above the earth and heaven."

Psalms cl. 1, 2, 6. "Praise ye the Lord. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness. Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Hallelujah."

Isaiah xl. 12, 15, 17, 22, 26, 28. "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before him are as nothing: and they are counted to him as less than nothing and vanity. It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold, who hath created these things, that bringeth out their hosts by number? He calleth them all by names, through the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth; hast thou not known, hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding."

Isaiah xlii. 5. "Thus saith God the Lord, he that created

created the heavens, and stretched them out; he that spread forth the earth, and that which cometh out of it: he that giveth breath to the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein," &c.

Isaiah xlv. 24. "Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone: that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself."

Isaiah xlv. 12, 18. "I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands, have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded. For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens, God himself that formed the earth, and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the Lord, and there is none else."

Isaiah xlviii. 13. "Mine hand also hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens; when I call upon them, they stand up together."

Isaiah lxiv. 8. "But now, O Lord, thou art our Father: we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand."

Jeremiah v. 22, 23, 24. "Fear ye not me? saith the Lord: will ye not tremble at my presence, who have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people hath a revolting and rebellious heart, they are revolted and gone. Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God that giveth rain, both the former and the latter in his seasons: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest."

Jeremiah x. 6, 7, 11, 12, 13. "Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name

is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O King of nations? for to thee doth it appertain; forasmuch as among all the wise men of the nations, and in all their kingdoms, there is none like unto thee. Thus shall ye say unto them, The gods that have not made the heavens and the earth, even they shall perish from the earth, and from under these heavens: He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion. When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens, and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures,"

Jeremiah xiv. 22. "Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? Art not thou he, O Lord our God? therefore we will wait upon thee; for thou hast made all those things."

Jeremiah xxxii. 17. "Ah Lord God! behold thou hast made the heaven and the earth, by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee."

After reading these passages, (consisting of more than an hundred verses) which I have collected only out of three books of the sacred scriptures, and could have added many more out of them alone, our readers will judge for themselves, what they ought to think of the following assertions in your book:

"The account (of the creation) however is harmless; and this it more than can be said of many other parts of the Bible. When we read the obscene stories, the voluptuous debaucheries, the cruel and torturous executions, the unrelenting vindictiveness, with which more than half the Bible is filled it would be more consistent that we called it *the word of a demon* than the word of God. It is the history of wickedness that has served to corrupt and brutalize mankind; and for my own part, I sincerely detest it, as I detest every thing that is cruel.

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We scarcely meet with any thing, a few phrases excepted, but what deserves either our abhorrence, or our contempt, till we come to the miscellaneous part of the Bible. Almost the only parts in the book called the Bible, that convey to us any idea of God, are some chapters in Job, and the 19th Psalm. I recollect no other. Those parts are true *Deistical* compositions; for they treat of the *Deity* through his works."

The Bible, Mr. *Paine*, appears exactly different to me from what it does to you; and therefore if I was to give advice to men, it would be different from yours, which runs thus, "In fine, do we want to know what God is? Search not the book called the Scripture, which any human hand might make, but the scripture called the Creation."

My advice would be, "Whoever would wish to know God, his perfections, character, and works, and the way of life and happiness, *search the scriptures which are able to make you wise unto salvation*, which no human hand could possibly have made; for bad men could never have formed such a book, which condemns them, their principles, works, and ways, in almost every page, and which treats in the sublimest manner of God, and his attributes; and good men would never have attempted to deceive their fellow creatures. So that on all hands, you may be perfectly assured that it cannot be the work of men. And you will find those internal marks as you read, that will prove it not to be the *work of a demon*, but the book of God, which if you read, experience, and practise, you cannot fail of being holy here, and happy hereafter."

As the sky appears full of stars, so the scriptures are full of passages relating to God, his attributes, perfections, character, works, and ways; his wisdom, power, goodness, love, mercy, grace and truth are all plainly revealed therein. And therefore your assertions are about as absurd as mine would be if I should

should assert, contrary to *reason* and *common sense*, that there is, neither fish in the sea, beasts on the land, fowls in the air, men on earth, nor sun, moon, planets, nor stars in the firmament above us.

I am with respect,

Yours, &c.

LETTER V.

SIR,

I AM sorry to find that you are determined not to receive the Bible as your rule of faith, even though it should appear ever so worthy of attention. Your words are these, "Did the book called the Bible, excel in purity of ideas and expression, all the books that are now extant in the world, I would not take it for my rule of faith, as being the word of God; because the possibility would nevertheless exist of my being imposed upon. But when I see throughout the greatest part of this book, scarcely any thing but a history of the grossest vices, and a collection of the most paltry and contemptible tales, I cannot dishonour my Creator by calling it by his name."

Any person that had never read the Bible, that should happen to read your account of it, believing you to be a man of sense, and that had a regard for truth, would imagine it to be a very weak, senseless, absurd, ridiculous, and wicked performance, not fit to be read, much less to be regarded. A book containing scarcely a single hint respecting the great Creator, his perfections, or works. But as it appears to me precisely in the contrary light, I shall attempt to confute some of the

slanders you have uttered against this most valuable of all books.

There are a thousand beauties in the Bible, and the more these are examined, the brighter they shine. And I do not know a more effectual way to refute what you have written against that Book, than to bring forth out of its treasures, some of those sublime truths which are therein revealed.

The perfections of the Deity fill up a very considerable part of that sacred volume; therein we read of his eternity, self-existence, self-sufficiency, independence, immensity, majesty, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, unchangeableness, goodness, justice, truth, &c.

It would be an amazing piece of work to collect and transcribe all the passages of scripture that refer to God and his perfections. In the Hebrew original he has ten names, which are all highly expressive of his Being, perfections, or character. As *El, Elai, Elhim, Elion, El-shaddai, El-sabbaoth, Ehejah, Jah, Jehovah, and Adonai*. The great name *JEHOVAH*, which signifies, *the Being who is, who was, and shall be, and the causer of being*; containing the past, present, and future tense, is said to be mentioned in the Hebrew Bible more than four thousand times, besides all the other names, some of which are frequently used. Judge then whether the Christian system of faith, which takes in the whole Bible, approaches quite so near to Atheism as you imagine! You say, "As to the Christian system of faith, it appears to me as a species of Atheism, a sort of religious denial of God. It is a compound made up of manism, with but little Deism, and is as near to Atheism as twilight is to darkness. It introduces between man and his Maker, an opaque body, which it calls, a Redeemer; as the moon introduces her opaque self between the earth and the sun, and it produces by this means, a religious or an irreligious eclipse."

eclipse of light. It has put the whole orb of reason into shade."

But I shall easily confute the idea of the Bible (which is the Christian system of faith) being a species of Atheism, by bringing forth a specimen of what it teaches respecting God, and his perfections. And as to what you say of the Redeemer eclipsing the divine character, we christians believe, know, and experience the direct reverse. We can say with St. Paul, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of *Jesus Christ*." 2 Cor. iv. 6. "Who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person," &c. Heb. i. 3. And St. John speaks of *Christ* as "The true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." St. John i. 9. And says, "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Ver. 14. And *Jesus* himself (whom you allow to be a virtuous and amiable man, and therefore certainly would not lie) said, "I am the light of the world, he that followeth me, shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." St. John viii. 12. And again, "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world" John ix. 5. And again, "Yet a little while is the light with you: (meaning himself) walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." St. John xii. 35, 36, 46. From all which you see, that neither *Christ* nor his apostles imagined that he came to be a dark body between man and his Maker. But I am afraid we must be obliged to rank you (notwithstanding your great political

knowledge) with them "that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight." *Isaiah* v. 20, 21.

For my own part, I find myself so sinful, ignorant, and weak, that I rejoice to have a mediator between the pure and holy God and me; one who can instruct me, and can introduce me into the presence of God. And if the mediator, or days man, be both God and man in one person, (as I believe) I think it is all the better; for in that case, he knows the mind of God perfectly, and the wants and weakness of man, and can lay his hand on both parties. I am not ashamed to own, that this view of the mediatorial plan, appears in my sight, highly reasonable and proper, and is to me a source of great joy and comfort. If you call this a *shade*, I can say that "I sat down under his shadow with great delight; and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

This man, whom you despise, is to me "as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." *Isaiah* xxxii. 2. That is, he is every thing to my soul that it needs, either for safety, comfort, health, or refreshment. For thou (O Lord) hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." *Isaiah* xxv. 4. A shadow to screen from the burning heat of the sun in summer, or in sultry climes, is sometimes a very desirable refreshment; and in this sense I am willing to allow that *Christ* is compared to the most refreshing shade. And I can heartily pray with *David*, "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. I will

will abide in thy tabernacle for ever; I will trust in the covert of thy wings." Psalm lxi. 2—4.

But in order further to evince that the Christian system of faith, or the Bible, is not a *species of Atheism*, I shall quote a few passages which speak of the divine perfections. When *Moses* asked God what his name was, that he might tell the children of *Israel*, God informed him that his name was EHE-JAH; which signifies, I WILL BE THAT I WILL BE. See the Hebrew text of Exod. iii. 14. Only the Great First Cause could say, I WILL BE. He is therefore self-existent and independent.

Exod. vi. 2, 3. "And God spake unto *Moses*, and said unto him, I am JEHOVAH: and I appeared unto *Abraham*, *Isaac* and *Jacob*, by the name of *El-shaddai*, or God Almighty; but by my name JEHOVAH was I not known unto them."

If you had known any thing of the Hebrew language, and had considered the vast import of this great and dreadful, yet glorious name JEHOVAH, which is mentioned so many thousand times in the original scriptures, and which I have before explained, I can hardly think that you would have represented the Bible as a book leading to *Atheism*. For whenever the word JEHOVAH occurs, it is as much as though it was said, *The Great Supreme Being, who is, was, and shall be, the cause of being*: and it is evident, that where this idea is kept in view, there cannot be the smallest tendency towards *Atheism*. But the Christian system of faith is founded upon this, and keeps it constantly in sight. Therefore Christianity is not even an approximation to *Atheism*.

When God gave his law from mount Sinai, he enforced the second commandment with these words; "For I JEHOVAH thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of *them that hate me*;" mind, *them that hate me*. This clause you left out,

out, and then said, "It is however necessary to except the declaration that says, that God *visits the sins of the fathers upon the children*. It is contrary to every principle of moral justice."

Is it not contrary to both truth and moral justice for you to leave out the character of those children upon whom God visits the iniquity of their fathers, even those *who hate their Creator*, and then reprobate one of the most righteous declarations that ever was made? If you had ever read with the least attention the 18th chapter of Ezekiel, you would have had the satisfaction of finding that God never meant to visit the sins of wicked parents upon virtuous children. For he there declares, that if a son "seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth and doeth not the like, but hath executed my judgments, and walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall surely live." But that God visits the iniquities of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation *of them that hate him*, is evident to a demonstration even in the *French Revolution*: for the dreadful crimes of the barbarous *Louis XIV.* especially his bloody persecutions against the innocent Protestants, perpetrated thro' the instigation of the wicked priests of that age, have been evidently visited upon his descendants, and the priests and nobles of the late kingdom of France. For it does not appear that their own personal crimes have comparatively deserved such severe retaliation as they have met with; but as they continued to approve in some measure of the deeds of their fathers, and did not repent, and change their lives, God, after giving them a long space for repentance, hath at last made inquisition for innocent blood, and hath evidently visited their fathers' iniquities upon them. And who may charge him with injustice? He will go on to fulfil his threatenings, whatever you or any other may object to their *moral justice*. But is certain
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that no injustice is found with him: for "Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand. Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face." Psalm lxxxix. 13, 14.

Since then we may see with our eyes, the awful visitations of God upon this generation, far beyond, in a comparative light, what their own iniquities have deserved, (for they never shed such torrents of innocent blood themselves, but their fathers did) and as we know that God is just, and this is evidently his work, and it is plain that he is now visiting the sins of their fathers upon them, we must conclude that the awful declaration made so long ago is just. And as we see it punctually fulfilled to this day, it will infallibly prove that it was made by God himself, since he continues to execute it: and thus we have a powerful evidence of the truth of the scripture, the divine legation of *Moses*, the authenticity of his mission, &c. from that very declaration by which you meant to overthrow the whole, by excepting against it as *contrary to every principle of moral justice*. And thus your most powerful weapons are turned against your cause. For no weapons formed against God's truth shall prosper: and every tongue that shall rise up to censure, judge, and condemn divine revelation, shall be self condemned. "So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away. And all men shall fear, and shall declare the work of God; for they shall wisely consider of his doing." Psalm lxiv. 8, 9.

Exod. xxxiv. 5, 6, 7. "And JEHOVAH descended in a cloud, and stood with him (*Moses*) there, and proclaimed the name of JEHOVAH. And JEHOVAH passed by before him and proclaimed JEHOVAH, JEHOVAH, God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the

the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and fourth generation."

In this passage, besides the names of God, and several of his divine perfections; we are informed of something which the great book of creation could never have taught us if we had studied it a thousand years, and yet it was of vast importance that we should be informed of it. And that is, that God could pardon iniquity, transgression, and sin, or as the Hebrew words more properly might be rendered, crookedness or perverseness, rebellion, and missing the mark. This is what reason, unenlightened by revelation, could never have obtained; as is evident by all the heathen philosophers, those great and goodmen among the heathen, who remained utterly at a loss in this important matter. They clearly saw that men had sinned, and were not in the state in which God made the human species at first; but whether or not it was possible for man to be brought again into his Maker's favour, they could not determine. So that if the books of *Moses* had only this one good passage in them, we that are sinners should have abundant reason to bless God for this divine revelation, which only he could possibly have given; for none could ever have known it, unless he had revealed it.

Levit. xix. 2. "Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy."

Deut. iv. 39. "Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that JEHOVAH he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath; there is none else."

Deut. vi. 4, 5. "Hear, O *Israel*, the Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

Deut. vii. 9, 10. "Know therefore that the Lord thy God he is God, the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him to a thousand generations. And repayeth

payeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him; he will repay him to his face."

Deut. x. 12, 13, 14, 17, 18. "And now *Israel*, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? Behold the heaven, and the heaven of heavens, is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty and a terrible, who regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward. He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment."

In all these passages, and many more of the same kind, with which the books of *Moses* abound, the character of God is drawn in the sublimest manner, such as at first could only be done by divine revelation. All this does not in the least tend to *Atheism*, nor do these passages merit either our hatred or contempt. But what does that man merit who uses his popular talents to render divine revelation ridiculous, and teaches men to despise the great things of God's law, and would intimate that the christian system is much the same as *Atheism*, though it is well known to contain all the pure principles of *Deism*, and many excellent things in which *Deism* is deficient?

I could easily multiply passages out of the law of *Moses*, that set forth the character of God, and his perfections in the most glorious and amiable point of light; and I beg such of my readers as are not acquainted with the Bible, not to think that in any instance I have exhausted those treasures that are more valuable than mountains of gold and rocks of diamonds; for I have but given a specimen. I should make this collection of

scriptures much larger, but for fear of swelling the work too much; and I should not have made it so large, if I could have thought of any other way to confute the assertions you have made, that the scriptures, except *Job*, and the 19th *Psalms*, contain little or nothing respecting the Deity and his works; for if I had asserted on the other hand that they abounded with lofty descriptions of the divine perfections, and yet had brought little or no proof from the writings themselves, there would only have been your assertions on one side, and mine on the other. And this obliges me to have recourse to that book which you so much despise, in which I find the divine perfections abundantly celebrated.

The *omniscience* and *omnipresence*, of God are gloriously represented in *Psalms* cxxxix. 1—12. “O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down-sitting, and mine up-rising; thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, it is high, that I cannot attain to it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me: even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.”

The majesty, immensity, and infinite greatness of God, are strikingly set forth in *Isaiah* xl. several passages of which I
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quoted in my last letter, when speaking of his wonderful works, and therefore shall not repeat them here.

The unchangeableness or *immutability* of God, is declared in various scriptures, as Numbers xxiii. 19. "God is not a man that he should lie; nor the son of man that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

1 Sam. xv. 29. "And also the strength of *Israel* will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man that he should repent."

Mal. iii. 6. "For I am *JEHOVAH*, I change not; therefore ye sons of *Jacob* are not consumed."

It is necessary here to notice, that though God has not in his nature or essence the smallest variation, or so much as the shadow of a turning, being invariably wise, good, powerful, just, &c. yet in his dispensations towards his creatures, there are frequent apparent changes, as the sun, though immoveably fixt in the centre of our system, appears to rise and set every day, and to alter its position from North to South, and from South to North, but this apparent variation does not puzzle any experienced astronomer; so neither will those passages, that speak after the manner of men, of God's repenting, &c. stumble any that are well acquainted with the scriptures. For it is evident from the nature of things, that the Deity must appear to man according to the condition in which man stands towards his Great Creator. And thus it is said in the scripture, "With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; and with the upright man, thou wilt shew thyself upright: with the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the forward thou wilt shew thyself unfavoury." 2 Samuel xxii. 26, 27.

It is the fixt and unchangeable intention of God to alter or vary his dispensations towards the children of men, as they alter their conduct towards him. And this, far from being a

blemish, is a beauty in the divine government. The following is the just, good, and unalterable rule, which he has laid down in this case. Jer. xviii. 7—10. "At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down, and to destroy it: if that nation against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them."

The characters of God take up so great a part of the Bible, that time would fail me to quote all the passages wherein his perfections are mentioned; but enough have been cited, to shew that you have unhappily written upon a subject that you do not understand; and have taken much pains to confute that, of which it appears you are in a great measure ignorant, or you never could have imagined, that the system of Christianity, which comprehends the whole Bible, was *as near to Atheism, as twilight is to darkness*. Which is one of the most extraordinary assertions that I ever heard.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.

LETTER VI.

SIR,

IN this letter I shall attack your strong fort, which if you could defend, you would be able to do something against revealed religion; but I trust to make it appear, that your assertions

assertions are inconclusive and groundless. You suppose that no one is under obligation to believe in divine revelation, except only the identical persons to whom it was made, however well attested it be. This is about the same as though I should assert, That no one is under an obligation so much as to believe the laws of their country to be genuine, still less so to obey them, except only those persons who were actually present when they were passed. And what strange confusion would be the consequence of such an assertion being received? There would be no faith, no confidence in the best government, no obedience, nor the least good order. All the inhabitants of the whole continent, men, women, and children, must assemble from year to year at the seat of government, and must be actually present at the passing of the laws; and then, as the company would be so large, some that stood near must tell others, and so it would be hearsay to the greater part still.

But I venture to assert, contrary to you, That revelation may be as certain to those who receive it from others, as to those who have it immediately from God, if those persons to whom it was first made, can give full and certain proof to others, that they have so received it, by working plain, evident, and undoubted miracles in confirmation of the same. And in this case, those who behold the miracles, have much stronger evidences of the revelation, than bare *hearsay*, though there are many persons of such eminently good characters, that there would be no great risk in believing a thing which they should affirm that they saw and heard. But undeniable miracles wrought in proof of the revelation given, make the matter just as certain to all that see them, as though the revelation had been communicated to each of them in particular. And thus the full evidence is immediately transferred from one to the multitude. And it would be lamentable indeed, if
human

human nature was so sunk down, that there could be no possible way of authenticating facts from age to age.

Moses, Jesus, and his apostles, all wrought many public and undeniable miracles in proof of the doctrine they taught, so that it is very unfair to pretend, that we are under no obligation to believe the revelations given to them, under a notion that they were not given to us, when we have full and undoubted proof of their being truly divine revelations, and given by God with a full intention of their being communicated to us, and for our benefit.

But your representation of the giving of the law, is so false, that I must conclude you either really or pretendedly ignorant of the history of it, and it is most charitable to believe the former; but at any rate, I shall endeavour to correct your account of the matter, by the scripture.

You say, "When *Moses* told the children of *Israel*, that he received the two tables of the commandments from the hand of God, they were not obliged to believe him, because they had no other authority for it than his telling them so; and I have no other authority for it, than some historian telling me so. The commandments carry no internal evidence of divinity within them. They contain some good moral precepts, such as any man qualified to be a law-giver or legislator, could produce himself, without having recourse to supernatural intervention."

Surprising! Have you forgot, or did you never notice, that the ten commandments, which were afterwards written upon two tables of stone, were delivered immediately by God himself from mount Sinai, to the whole congregation? you surely did not mean to misrepresent this matter! The account of the giving of the law from mount Sinai, is the most particular that can be conceived. It was notified to the congregation three days beforehand, and the people were ordered to pre-

pare

pare for the grand solemnities of the third day. They were ordered to set bounds round the mount, that neither man nor beast might approach within a certain distance.

“ And the Lord said unto *Moses*, Lo, I come to thee in a thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and believe thee for ever.”

“ And it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet waxed exceeding loud; so that all the people that were in the camp trembled. And *Moses* brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a great furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, *Moses* spake, and God answered him by a voice.” Here could be no deception, nor possibility of mistake: All the people saw and heard for themselves. “ And God spake all these words, and said, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me, &c.” Thus God himself delivered the ten commandments from Sinai’s top, with a loud voice, so that all the people heard them with their own ears. If you had considered this, you would not, I think, have spoken so lightly of these commandments as you have done. Here then was revelation made to all the people, not *second-hand*, nor *hearsay*; and there is no doubt but they might have heard the whole of the body of the laws which God gave to *Moses*, but it was their own choice to receive the remainder from the mouth of *Moses*, and not immediately from God. “ And all the people saw and heard the thunders, and the
lightnings,

lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto *Moses*, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die. See *Exod. xix. and xx.* This great event fully proved that God could make a revelation of his mind and will to men. And this was a revelation according to your own mind, made to all the people. And the credentials of *Moses* were fully then authenticated by God himself; and the people intreated him to be a mediator between God and them, and they all solemnly promised to hear, believe and obey him. And therefore, when *Moses* afterwards brought the ten commandments written upon two tables of stone, and told them that he received them from the hand of God, they were under the highest obligation to believe him, directly contrary to your assertion! For, first, they had heard the very same words pronounced by the divine voice out of the midst of the fire; and secondly, they had desired *Moses* to receive the words from God, and to speak to them; and they had solemnly promised to believe and obey him. So that it was a thing of their own choice; and therefore your saying, that *they were not obliged to believe him*, when they had covenanted so to do, tends as much to the destruction of all good order and free government, as it does to the overthrow of religion. Dangerous politics these! not worthy of the name of *common sense*, *rights of man*, nor *age of reason*, but worthy to be stiled, *falsehood*, *truce-breaking*, and *anarchy*. My politics have always been, that the plain commands of our Creator, or evident reason, or our own deliberate lawful solemn engagements bind us; as also the laws of our country founded in reason and justice, made by ourselves in person, or by legal representatives. But your present politics set all afloat. Alas, how differently you speak now, from what you did when you wrote *common sense*,
wherein

wherein you advised that God should be acknowledged King of America, and the Bible solemnly crowned as his law, and the law of our country. But, *how is the gold become dim! and the most fine gold changed!* You must acknowledge that your politics are greatly altered; but I hope my countrymen will not be so weak as to follow you, to the total destruction of all good order and government.

This great event has all the four infallible marks of truth, and therefore it is impossible to be false (even though we should not be able to prove the inspiration of the whole Bible) for it was such a fact as the senses of men could judge of. They could see the smoke and the fire, and hear the thundings, the trumpet, the mighty voice, and the words of the law.

The whole congregation of *Israel*, (about three millions of men, women and children) were eye and ear witnesses of the same. There was an account written of it by *Moses* himself, and read before all the people; and there was a feast instituted in remembrance of the event, even the feast of Pentecost, fifty days after the passover. And this institution took place from that time, and has been constantly observed by the Jews every year, from that season, down to the present period.

“And *Moses* came and told the people the words of the Lord, and all the judgments, (that is, all which is written in *Exod. xxi, xxii, xxiii.*) and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord hath said, will we do. And *Moses* wrote all the words of the Lord, &c. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people; and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.” *Exod. xxiv. 3, 4, 7,*

Nothing can be more evident than the truth of these facts, and consequently of the certainty of divine revelation: for *Moses* frequently reminded the people of what their eyes had

seen

seen, and their ears had heard, and they never contradicted him; which they would certainly have done, if he had not told them what they knew to be the truth. For they were an unbelieving and disobedient people, and who frequently murmured against him, but never gave the least intimation of his falsifying facts. And his words to them have all the marks of truth and sincerity, for he appeals to their own senses. "Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart, all the days of thy life: but teach them to thy sons, and to thy sons' sons: specially the day when thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they might teach their children. And ye came near, and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire, unto the middle of heaven, with darkness, clouds and thick darkness. And the Lord spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice. And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments, and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. And the Lord commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them, in the land whither ye go over to possess it. Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves: for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire; lest ye corrupt yourselves," &c.

"For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard

heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord (or Jehovah) he is God, there is none else beside him. Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee; and upon earth he shewed his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire." Deut. iv. 9—15, 32, 33, 36.

And in the 5th chapter of the same book, *Moses* repeats the ten commandments, prefacing them with these words: "Hear, O *Israel*, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep and do them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord our God made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. The Lord talked with you face to face in the mount, out of the midst of the fire. I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to shew you the word of the Lord: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount." And then, after repeating the ten commandments, he adds, "These words the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice, and he added no more; and he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me. And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, (for the mountain did burn with fire) that ye came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders, and ye said, Behold, the Lord our God hath shewed us his glory, and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth. Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us. If we hear the voice of the Lord our God any

more, then we shall die. For, who is there of all flesh that hath heard the voice of the living God, speaking out of the midst of the fire, (as we have) and lived? Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall speak unto thee, and we will hear it, and do it. And the Lord heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me: and the Lord said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such an heart in them that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!" Deut. v. 1—5, 22—29.

I make these long quotations from the scriptures for the following reasons.

1. To shew that you have greatly misrepresented the Mo-
saic revelation, or the giving of the law.
2. To make it
plain, that divine revelation was given at first to all the con-
gregation: contrary to your insinuations. It is evident that
this was a fact, by its having all the marks of truth, and by
the constant appeals which *Moses* made to the people, while
they were yet alive, who saw and heard those wonders.
3.
To make it plain, that the credentials of *Moses* were such as
admitted of no dispute.
4. That this *hearsay* revelation, as
you are pleased to call it, or receiving it from one, the proofs
of whose mission were infallible, was what the people delibe-
rately chose as the most preferable method. And conse-
quently, it was divine revelation still, and communicated in
the very way which they desired; and which, therefore, they
were as much obliged to believe and obey, as though it had
been immediately given to each of them, as the law of the
ten commands was from Sinai.
5. As you keep no Bible, I
quote these passages for your perusal, hoping that it may please

God

God to give you repentance for the many false and shameful assertions that you have made respecting the Bible, which are scattered through all your book, as though it was chiefly filled up with a *history of the grossest vices, and a collection of the most paltry and contemptible tales*: and that it would be more consistent that we called it the word of a demon than the word of God, &c. &c. I hope you will at least allow, that these quotations from the book of *Moses*, to which I could easily add many hundreds more, do not deserve either our abhorrence or contempt. 6. It is only by making such large quotations from the book itself, that I am able fully to refute what you have said against the Bible; for let its voice be only heard, and then all your numerous slanders against it fall to the ground at once.

Hoping that you will think better of these matters,

I remain

Your sincere friend, &c.

LETTER VII.

SIR,

I AM glad to find that you allow the possibility of God's making a revelation of his mind and will to men; you say, "No one will deny or dispute the power of the Almighty, to make such a communication if he pleases." And I, for my part am apt to think, that (considering not only his power, which you allow, but his wisdom, which is so superior to ours, and also his amazing goodness and kindness, and the need we stand in of a revelation, in order to know him, and our duty toward him, and his purposes concerning us) it is highly probable, and even certain, that he must have made such a revelation long ago.

ago. But if a revelation is necessary at all, it is needful for the many, as well as for the few: and therefore it must be given to the multitude immediately, as the ten commandments were given to the Israelites at Sinai; or the revelation must be given to a few, to be divulged to the people at large, for whose benefit it is intended. The first of these methods is attended with so much terror, that most men like the Israelites at Sinai, would choose to receive it in the secondary method. As *Elihu* said to Job, "Behold, I am according to thy wish, in God's stead; I also am formed out of the clay. Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee." Job xxxiii. 6, 7.

But in the secondary method, it is necessary that what is proposed as revelation, be either such as God only could make known; or, something so eminently wise, great, and good as to carry its own evidence with it, that it came from God; or, that it be confirmed by evident signs and miracles. Therefore, if a person to whom a revelation be given of God, be able to confirm it by evident and undeniable miracles, it is as much a revelation to the people as to himself, and they have far more than *only his word for it, that it was made to him*. And they are under equal obligation to believe it, as though it was made immediately to themselves; seeing it is intended for their benefit, and confirmed by such numbers of indisputable miracles, as make it of equal certainty, as though it had been given to them by God himself, without any mediator. My readers will observe, that this view of the matter entirely changes the ground, and shews that your representation is false, and calculated to mislead; by declaring that we can have no other possible evidence of divine revelation than the word of the person to whom it was first given. Whereas, both the revelation by *Moses*, and that by *Christ*, were confirmed by multitudes of evident miracles, that could not be disputed; which

were

were done before thousands, and were open to the examination of all. And to these miracles, both *Moses* and our Saviour frequently appeal, even in the presence of those very persons who beheld them with their own eyes. The miracles by which the Mosaic revelation was confirmed, were too evident and certain to admit of a moment's dispute, and had all the marks of real wonders. The ten plagues that were wrought in Egypt, upon *Pharaoh* and all his people, were facts of the utmost notoriety. The dividing the Red Sea; and making a way for the great host of *Israel*, consisting of about three millions of people, with their multitude of beasts and cattle; to pass through in safety, while *Pharaoh* and his host were overthrown there, was evidently a miracle that nothing short of the almighty power of God could perform, and it was certainly done, and done in the presence of vast numbers of people; who, though they were the most unbelieving people in the world, yet never pretended to dispute this plain matter of fact, which they saw with their own eyes. Their being fed forty years with manna from heaven; supplied with water from the fragment of a flinty rock, in the valley of Rephidim; and the preservation of their garments upon them through all their journey; were three such constant and standing miracles, as were much more than sufficient to confirm the revelation given by *Moses*. There was no possibility of deception in any of these things; for to have made them believe that they went through the sea, when they did not, and fed upon manna forty years, and drank water from the rock, and that their clothes and even their shoes lasted them all that time; when in reality none of these things took place, requires a faith as much stronger than mine to credit, as the credulity of a modern Deist is greater than that of a christian; which I suppose is more than a thousand times. For not only must the deception have been a miracle many thousand times greater than the true wonder, but

but what is worse still, it supposes the God of truth to have exerted his power to deceive his poor creatures; which is an abominable idea, highly insulting to the Majesty of heaven and impossible to be true.

As I observed, that *Moses* appealed to the wonders wrought before the eyes of the people I will produce a specimen.

“ And when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments which the Lord our God hath commanded you? Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were *Pharaoh's* bond-men in Egypt and the Lord brought us out of Egypt, with a mighty hand. And the Lord shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon *Pharaoh*, and upon all his household, before our eyes: and he brought them us from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers.” Deut. vi. 20, 21, 22, 25.

“ And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knowest not, neither did thy fathers know; &c. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell these forty years.

“ Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, &c. who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drouth, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint; who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end,” Deut. viii. 2, 3, 4, 11, 15, 16.

And know ye this day, for I speak not with your children,
which

which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisement of the Lord your God, and his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched out arm, and his miracles, and his acts which he did in the midst of Egypt, and unto *Pharaoh*, king of Egypt, and unto all his land; and what he did unto the army of Egypt, unto their horses, and to their chariots: how he made the water of the Red Sea to overflow them, as they pursued after you, and how the Lord hath destroyed them unto this day: and what he did unto you in the wilderness, until ye came to this place: and what he did unto *Dathan* and *Abiram*, the sons of *Eliab*, the son of *Reuben*; how the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all *Israel*. But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord which he did. Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day." &c. Deut. xi. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

"And *Moses* called unto all *Israel*, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, unto *Pharaoh*, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land: the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles. And I have led you forty years in the wilderness; your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot. Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink, that ye might know that I am the Lord your God." Deut. xxix. 2, 3, 5, 6.

It appears plain from this evidence, that the children of *Israel* had abundance more than the word of *Moses* to prove the truth of divine revelation to them. For all these great signs and miracles certainly happened, or he never would have appealed to the people, as witnesses of their truth and reality; and they could not be deceptions, unless we can suppose three
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millions

millions of people might be so far deceived for forty years together, as to imagine that they gathered bread from the ground, and drank water from the rock to their full content, and wore the same clothes all that time, without perceiving them decay. If these great things actually happened, it is absolutely certain that they could only be brought about by the power of God; for the utmost extent of human power could do nothing towards feeding so many millions of people, daily, for forty years together, with bread from heaven, and giving them and all their beasts water sufficient for drink, and for all other uses, during the same time, out of a fragment of a flinty rock, and preventing their clothes from waxing old, though constantly worn forty years.

Therefore, if these things all took place, as they surely did, and could only be brought about by divine and infinite power, as must be confessed by all men of reason, it will then follow, that the Israelites had as full proof of the revelation given by *Moses*, as though it had been given immediately from God, to each of them in particular, and were under equal obligations to obey it, as though that had been the case. There are also many internal evidences in the Mosaic revelation, which to me are full proofs of its authenticity, but I have not time to insist upon them; nor need I, as what I have already advanced is sufficient.

The revelation by *Jesus Christ*, was confirmed by many undoubted miracles. He healed the sick, he opened the eyes of the blind, even those who were born blind; he made the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the lame to walk; he cured the maimed, cleansed the lepers, cast out demons, raised the dead, turned water into wine, fed great multitudes with but little food, and had much more left than when he began; calmed the winds and seas with his word; walked upon the raging waves, and enabled *Peter* to do the same; brought large shoals
of

of fish to *Peter's* net in an instant, when he had been toiling all night and had taken nothing, &c. These miracles were done openly, before multitudes, and were such as the senses of men could judge of; they were not done in a corner, and had nothing of the appearance of juggling tricks in them. Some of them were often repeated, perhaps on many thousands of objects, as the healing of the sick, &c. and there could be no deception in them. His greatest enemies acknowledged the reality of his miracles, though they sometimes blasphemously denied the power by which they were evidently wrought. As ignorant as *Nicodemus* was, he reasoned far better upon the subject of miracles than you do; he reckoned them as some of the highest proofs of a divine mission, while you only reckon them as *shows*, to amuse and make the people stare and wonder.

He said unto *Jesus*, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him." John iii. 2. This was reasoning upon the principles of *common sense*; for nothing can be more absurd than to suppose, that God would give any person power to perform real miracles in confirmation of falsehood.

Our Saviour himself appeals to the miracles he wrought, as full proofs of his mission, and of the revelation that he gave; and it will be extremely difficult for you, either to prove that he wrought no real miracles, or that the works he wrought were not full, sufficient and infallible proofs of that divine revelation that came by him. He says, "I have greater witness than that of *John*: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me." St. John v. 36.

And to his disciples he says, "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me; or else believe me for the very works sake." St. John xiv. 11.

And elsewhere he says, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father." St. John xv. 24.

It is true that *Christ* gave many other proofs of the truth of his mission besides the miracles he wrought; but these of themselves were abundantly sufficient for the purpose. And I am far from thinking that an appeal to undeniable miracles, tends to weaken the evidence of divine revelation, (as you seem to suppose) but rather greatly strengthens, supports and confirms it; and appears to me, contrary to what it does to you, as the most suitable, short and easy method that infinite wisdom could possibly take to prove revelation to people in general. For but few of mankind comparatively are possessors of strong reasoning powers, able at once to judge of the truth of a revelation by its moral fitness: but most are blest with the natural senses of seeing, hearing, feeling, &c. and therefore are as competent judges and witnesses of real miracles, as the most wise, sensible, and learned men on earth. And the lowest degree of reason is sufficient to shew, that whenever undeniable miracles are wrought, they must be wrought by the power of God, and that he would never exert that power to confirm a falsehood; and consequently, that a revelation confirmed by such wonders is fully proved to be genuine. And for this purpose the evangelists who wrote the life of *Jesus* gave us a small specimen of the miracles which he wrought: as St. *John* says, "And many other signs truly did *Jesus* in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that ye might believe that *Jesus* is the *Christ*, the Son of God: and that believing you might have life through his name." St. John xx. 30, 31.

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest and diligent heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should

should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward : how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was afterward confirmed unto us by them that heard him : God also bearing them witness, both with signs, and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his will." Heb. ii. 2, 3, 4.

The Christian revelation in itself contains such internal evidences of its truth and excellency, as one might indeed think quite sufficient to induce any candid rational mind to receive it ; but in a matter of such vast and infinite importance, God hath not barely given us such testimony as might be judged enough to prove it true, but hath, as it were, heaped witness upon witness, line upon line, evidence upon evidence ; till there appears to me the highest possible degree of moral certainty, and no room left for even the shadow of a doubt. And in the many different kinds of evidence of the truth of divine revelation, different minds may choose that which is most agreeable to their own peculiar turn and habit of thinking. Some may be fully satisfied by the excellency of the doctrines ; others by the perfection of the system of morality therein taught ; some by the life and character of *Christ* and his apostles, may feel themselves assured, that such men could not impose upon the world ; others may be persuaded by the remarkable coincidence between the ancient prophecies, and the events of *Christ's* birth, life, sufferings, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, &c. that he was the true *Messiah*, and consequently that we are under obligation to believe him : Some may see such a moral fitness in the whole system, as to be fully assured that it came from God ; while others may require miracles. There is sufficient evidence in each of these to prove the truth of the Christian revelation ; what then is the whole united

united together? And how great must be their guilt, who reject with disdain, a revelation that has all these and many other marks of its truth and authenticity? I think, we as men, have abundant reason to be glad, both that God has given us divine revelation, and hath stamped it with such infallible marks of truth, that it is impossible that we should be deceived by it, or have the smallest reason to doubt its authenticity.

I am, Sir,

Your sincere friend; &c.

LETTER VIII.

SIR,

IN my last I shewed how divine revelation might be as fully proved to the multitude, as though it had been given to each of them in particular, viz. by such miracles being wrought in confirmation of the same, as were only possible to be done by the power of God; and which reason assures us would never be exerted to confirm falsehood and deception. These miracles must be such as the senses of men could judge of, and they must be done openly; and if this be the case, their evidence is unquestionable.

But how shall we that live so long after, that have not seen the miracles with our own eyes, be assured that the revelation be true? This has been answered before, in the second letter; for if the resurrection of *Jesus* be true, as is there proved, the truth of his mission and revelation will follow of course. And the certainty of the truth of the miracles may be as easily communicated

municated to the remotest generations, by history and institutions, as any other facts. Besides all which, we have this undeniable advantage, that the internal evidence of what we call divine revelation, is, according to your own rule, fully sufficient to commend it to us. For whatever perfections of God you can discover in the great book of nature, even after ages of strict attention, we can find plainly revealed in the Bible, and be able to learn in a few hours; and whatever duties you may be able to learn from the works of creation, whether gratitude towards God, or benevolence towards your fellow-creatures, we are taught in the scriptures in the shortest, plainest, and directest manner; and may attain the knowledge of with little or no trouble; so that we have that time to practise in, which you must take up in learning. And I may safely challenge you and all your brethren, ever to learn or find out one single perfection in the character of God, or one duty towards him, yourselves, or fellow-creatures, by reading the book of creation, that I cannot find in plain words in the Bible, under all the disadvantages of a translation. And there are several things which the scriptures teach us, that can never be learned from the book of nature; such as, that the Deity can pardon sin, hath prepared a state of immortality for men, and will raise them from the dead, &c.

But besides all these, and many other proofs that we have of the truth of divine revelation, there is one standing evidence, which is the same to us as the testimony of miracles was to those who saw them performed, at the time that revelation was first given; and that is, the constant and exact fulfilment of prophecy. This has been a standing miracle, in all ages since revelation was committed to writing; prophecies have always been intermixed, and these have been of various lengths; for the prophets did not always shoot (according to your assertion) *with a long bow of a thousand years*, but on the contrary,

contrary, prophesied of some things that were fulfilled in their own time, with the utmost exactness; some were accomplished a little after their death, while many were living who heard the prophecies; and these being so exactly fulfilled, naturally tended to give credit to those that reached farther forward. And those that spake of things a thousand years to come, were fulfilled in the same exact manner; and such as are not yet accomplished, will doubtless be, in like manner, fully justified by their corresponding events.

The prophecies respecting *Jesus*, were certainly delivered long before his birth, for they were translated into the Greek language, some hundreds of years before he appeared in the world; so that there can be no dispute in that respect; and though they were given forth so long before, and were so various, and some of them so unlikely to be ever accomplished, yet they all met in him in a most surprising manner, too exactly to be the work of chance, and altogether afford an incontestible proof of the truth of divine revelation. I will give a little specimen.

It was prophesied that he should be born at Bethlehem; but until near the time of his birth, there appeared no likelihood of its being fulfilled; for *Mary* his mother dwelt at Nazareth, a city in Galilee, far remote; neither does it appear, from any account we have, that she had any thoughts of going there; but the prophecy could not fail, and therefore *Augustus* must be filled with a curiosity to know the exact number of his subjects; and to this end, he published a decree, that all persons without exception must repair to their native places, there to be enrolled on the spot. This decree brought *Joseph* and *Mary* to Bethlehem, soon enough for *Jesus* to be born there, according to the prophecy.

It was foretold of him that he should be of a most mild, pacific, benevolent disposition, should bear the infirmities and
sicknesses

sicknesſes of the people, and ſhould work miracles for their benefit, &c. and yet that he ſhould be deſpiſed, rejected, contemned and abhorred by that nation: which altogether ſeemed very unlikely, and yet was exactly accompliſhed, and ſo remains to this time. For though *Jeſus* was the moſt amiable of men, and never did the Jews the ſmalleſt injury, yet they hate him to this day, far more than the whole train of impoſtors, who have at different times brought ſuch great diſaſters on their nation, eſpecially in the reign of *Adrian*, the Roman emperor, in the ſecond century.

It was foretold of *Jeſus*, that he ſhould be ſold for thirty pieces of ſilver, betrayed by one of his pretended friends, ſhould have his hands and feet pierced, his garments divided by lot, ſhould be mocked and ridiculed, ſhould have vinegar given him to drink, ſhould be numbered with tranſgreſſors, ſhould riſe from the dead without ſeeing corruption, and ſhould aſcend up to heaven: all theſe circumſtances were exactly fulfilled, according to thoſe hiſtories, which for many reaſons could not be cunningly deviſed fables.

There are ſeveral ſtanding prophecies which are ſo plain, as not to be eaſily evaded. The caſe of the Arabians, the deſcendants of *Iſhmael*, is a moſt wonderful phenomenon in the hiſtory of mankind; and proves the truth of divine revelation. The prophecy that *Iſhmael* ſhould be a *wild man*, that *his hand ſhould be againſt every man, and every man's hand againſt him*, and yet that *he ſhould dwell in the preſence of all his brethren*; ſeemed extremely improbable, yet it has been punctually fulfilled, not only in *Iſhmael* himſelf, but in his poſterity to this day. They live in the wilderneſs where he was born; they are a kind of wild people; they ſubſiſt by rapine, &c. they are enemies to all mankind; and yet they have maintained their natural liberty and independence through all ages. They have never been wholly conquered and ſubjugated by any

power;

power ; far less led captive out of their own land. They have, in their turn, been great conquerors, under *Mahomet* and his successors, and possessed a very extensive empire, but have again returned nearly to their ancient limits ; but they never were subdued, though some of the greatest conquerors of the east, very seriously attempted to bring them under the yoke of bondage.

Another standing proof of revelation, is the existence of the Jews in their present state of dispersion ; scattered among all nations, yet unmixed with any. They have out-lived all the nations and kingdoms that oppressed and persecuted them of old, and they have, as it were, subsisted by miracle, many ages ; having no government, no abiding place, no country, which they can call their own ; and being a proverb, a by-word, and a curse among the nations of the earth. He must be blind indeed, that can read the prophecies respecting them in their present situation, and not perceive the most exact coincidence between the predictions and the events.

There are great numbers of prophecies uttered by *Moses* and the Prophets, and by *Christ* himself, respecting the miseries which have fallen upon the Jews, and their present state, which have been accomplished, and are now accomplishing before our eyes, and that with the utmost degree of exactness. But for a specimen, let any one read but the 26th chapter of *Leviticus*, and the 28th of *Deuteronomy*, and see with what an astonishing exactness their whole estate, both prosperous and adverse, was then predicted, more than three thousand years ago. Scarce a circumstance that has ever happened to that nation, but is there foretold. And who but God could have inspired a man to declare, that the people should exist through all ages, and yet should suffer the greatest complication of miseries that ever any nation did since time began ? If there was no other proof of the truth and reality of divine revelation,

relation, but the fulfilment of those prophecies alone, I should look upon it to be quite sufficient. And I am astonished how it is possible for any man, that has ever read the prophetic parts of the Bible, and compared them with ancient and modern history, to have any doubts of the truth of the scriptures. There are the prophecies of the destruction of Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, Edom, Moab, Ammon, &c. the present base and contemptible state of Egypt; the rise, progress, decline and destruction of the four empires of the Chaldeans, Medians and Persians, Grecians and Romans, that compared with their exact accomplishment, seem fully sufficient to produce conviction in the most unbelieving mind. I must refer my readers to bishop *Newton's* dissertations on the prophecies, where all these subjects are treated of in a most plain and striking manner. It is a work that I have found of great use to me, and I hardly think it possible for a man to read it with candour and attention, and continue an unbeliever in divine revelation.

The present revolution in France, and the total destruction of the names of men, all titles of nobility, and all the religious orders, was an event so plainly foretold even in the book of *Revelations*, which you call *a book of riddles*, that Mr. *Peter Jurieu*, a Protestant minister, more than an hundred years ago, wrote a book, wherein he positively mentions the present revolution in France, and the total destruction of the names or titles of men, and all the orders of *monks, friars, &c.* and even fixed the very time when it should take place, only claiming a latitude of ten years, from the year 1780 to the year 1790, and this could hardly require *the ingenuity of posterity to make it point blank* as you say, for it is much within a *thousand miles of the mark*. And this may serve to shew you, that if the book of *Revelations* is a *book of riddles* to you, there are those in the world who do understand it; and from this instance it is plain,

if there was no other, that its truth and inspiration may be depended upon. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things that are written therein: for the time is at hand." Rev. i. 3.

I am far from being shaken in my mind respecting christianity, by the spread of infidelity that has lately taken place; for this itself is an event foretold by *Jesus Christ*, in these words, "Nevertheless, when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth!" St. Luke xviii. 8. Which prophecy, though very unlikely in itself, considering the vast abundance of evidence in favour of divine revelation, is now fulfilling very fast; and thus even your *Age of Reason*, though written expressly against the scriptures, tends to confirm them, St. Peter speaks also of the infidelity which you and others are endeavouring to propagate, in the following remarkable words, "Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days, scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers are fallen asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation," &c. 2 Pet. iii. 3, 4.

And St. *Paul* describes the wickedness of these ages, in the following striking expressions: "This know also, that in the last days, perilous times shall come; For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God," &c. 2 Tim. iii. 1, 2, 3, 4. So that it appears, that both the infidelity and the wickedness of our times, were long ago predicted in the scriptures, and therefore afford an argument in favour of divine revelation, drawn from the very means which you take

to endeavour to destroy its credit ; but all your efforts against it, will be utterly in vain.

Detestable as infidelity in itself appears, being no better than making God a liar, by refusing to believe the record that he has given of his Son, and which he has witnessed to be true, in such a manner, as to render unbelief without excuse : yet as the spread of it in these latter days, was an event fore-known and predicted by *Jesus Christ* himself, as one of the signs of his near approach, we Christians can behold it in this light without being greatly troubled, or in the least shaken in mind. We are forewarned in the scriptures of these things, and therefore are forearmed against discouragement on this account. And besides, we have the pleasure to see that God has made use of this flood of *infidelity* in France, to destroy *popery* more effectually in a few years, than by the gentler methods of, instructions, &c. it could have been done in several centuries. Thus the prophecies that relate to the destruction of that hierarchy, are accomplishing at the same time, with the predictions of the spread of infidelity, and by that as a principal mean ; and so there is a wheel within a wheel. And therefore, while you are thinking to destroy the evidence of divine revelation, you are establishing it beyond dispute, in the minds of all candid, serious, enquiring men.

I have been many years of the opinion, that infidelity would be one of the means of destroying superstition and Popish influence ; and God knows how to destroy infidelity in his own time, by the coming and kingdom of *Christ*.

Had you only attacked the errors and superstitions of the Romish Church, you would have performed a noble service, worthy of yourself, and of the cause of Liberty, which I myself love as well as you can ; but why attack the sacred scriptures, which have done ten thousand times more to enlighten, reform, civilize, and make men happy, than all the other means

means that ever were used? You cannot but know that the knowledge of the scriptures, and liberty, have faded or flourished together. You also know, that the Church of Rome hath in all ages, sought to keep the common people ignorant of the scriptures, on purpose to keep them in ignorance and slavery, and attached to superstition; and therefore, in endeavouring to lessen the value of the Bible, and doing all in your power to make people neglect it, you are ignorantly supporting the old system of tyranny and arbitrary government. The book of divine revelation, or the Christian system as contained in the Bible, is so far from being inimical to arts, sciences, philosophy, astronomy, &c. that you are compelled against your will to acknowledge, that, "The event that served more than any other to break the first link in this long chain of despotic ignorance, is that known by the name of the reformation by *Luther*. From that time, though it does not appear to have made any part of the intention of *Luther*, or of those who are called Reformers, the sciences began to revive, and liberality, their natural associate, began to appear." Such a confession as this from an avowed adversary to divine revelation, or the Scriptures, is more against your cause than a thousand arguments, and fairly overthrows all that you had before asserted in the most scandalous manner against the Christian system, as though it was the real cause of all that ignorance which had abounded in the world, during so many hundred years prior to the reformation. The Christian system so far from laying all sciences waste, was itself laid waste; and the Bible being hidden, and hardly known to one in a thousand, a system of tyranny, ignorance and superstition took place; but as soon as the Bible began to be a little read, and understood in some small degree by the common people, then *the first link of the long chain of despotic ignorance was broken, according to your own account; then the sciences*
began

began to revive; and liberality, their natural associate, began to appear; and this without any apparent intention of Luther, or the reformers; all the better; then it will undeniably appear, to be the native tendency of the knowledge of the Scriptures, to break the chains of despotic ignorance, to revive sciences, and to cause liberality to appear. This is certainly true, from your own concessions, as well as it appears from constant facts: for in proportion as the Scriptures are known, read, studied, admired, and practised by the common people, arts, sciences, liberality, true, civil and religious liberty, with every noble sentiment that can adorn human nature, will flourish and prosper. But where the Bible is hidden from the common people, or they are forbidden to interpret it for themselves, there ignorance, savage barbarity, tyranny and superstition reign: and arts, sciences, and liberality fade away. But then what curious arguments you have brought against the Christian system? Exactly the same as if I should say after a very long and severe drought, 'That drought was wholly owing to the rain, and all the barrenness of the ground is to be ascribed to the same cause, however unwilling the lovers of rain may be to believe it; for as soon as the rain began to descend, the grass and vegetables immediately began to spring.' What would people think of the man that should argue so in the things of nature? Just what we ought to think of you in spiritual things. Let us once more view this most curious argument against the Bible, *The Christian system laid all the fair fields of science waste*; for during many hundreds of years, while the Bible was concealed, all sciences faded: but as soon as the reformation began, and the common people got the Bible in their hands, the long chain of despotic ignorance was broken, sciences revived, and liberality began to appear; and this as the natural consequence of their perusing the scriptures for themselves. (For this was the great and fundamental principle

principle of the reformation.) For it could not be owing to any thing else, for the Reformers had no particular intention to revive sciences, &c. Therefore the knowledge of the scriptures is destructive to all liberal sciences; as is evident from their flourishing state in all times and places, when and where the Bible is known. Is this Mr. Paine? the author of *Common Sense*? Is this the *Age of Reason*? How is the mighty fallen! Verily, your own tongue is made to fall upon your self and God hath in you *made foolish the wisdom of this world*. For while you have been writing against his book, and taking great pains, in attempting to prove, that its direct tendency is to destroy all useful arts and sciences, you have inadvertently quoted a striking fact in the history of the world, which has entirely overthrown all your reasoning. And the greater part of all historical facts will be found upon the same side; and will go to prove, that useful arts and beneficial sciences have generally kept pace with the knowledge of divine revelation. I should not have said so much upon this so very plain a subject, but that the greater part of your book evidently aims to prove Christianity inconsistent with all useful arts and sciences, than which nothing can be more false and absurd; the direct contrary being the truth: as is evident from numerous facts, and even from your own account of the reformation.

You have in particular, taken uncommon pains to endeavour to shew, that the Christian system is inconsistent with the belief of the plurality of worlds: for you say, "To believe that God created a plurality of worlds, at least as numerous as what we call stars, renders the Christian system at once little and ridiculous, and scatters it in the mind like feathers in the air. The two beliefs cannot be held together in the same mind; and he who thinks that he believes both, has thought but little of either."

In this paragraph, as in many others of your book, you have written without consideration; and have ruined the cause that you meant to promote. For is it possible, that you should not have known, that Sir *Isaac Newton* himself, that greatest and most celebrated of astronomers, was a zealous defender of divine revelation? I have seen a treatise that he wrote upon the prophecy of *Daniel*; and probably he wrote much more upon religious subjects, that I have not seen. Will you say, that he had never thought much upon either astronomy or christianity? for it is evident, that he was a firm believer of both. Mr. *Derham*, that wrote so excellently upon astronomy in the present century, was a divine; so was the late ingenious Mr. *Hervey*, who wrote contemplations upon the starry heavens, which if you had ever read, you might have seen that one who certainly thought much of both, more than imagined that he believed both. There are many, to my knowledge, who make divinity their principal study, that are as great lovers of astronomy as yourself, and as firm believers in the plurality of worlds. These have surely thought much upon one of the subjects at least, and yet they imagine that they believe both. I myself have thought much upon the Christian system, and considerable upon the plurality of worlds, and I never could find, that the belief of the latter, rendered the former, *little and ridiculous*, nor does it scatter it in my mind like feathers in the air; but produces the contrary effect; it makes me admire the plan of redemption the more. "An undevout astronomer is mad," says the great Dr. *Young*, author of the Night Thoughts, who was himself a believer of both the Christian system and astronomy. And we have the pleasure to reckon some of the greatest astronomers, philosophers, poets, statesmen, and profound reasoners in the list of Christians, such names as *Bacon*, *Newton*, *Boyle*, *Locke*, *Addison*, *Milton*, *Barrow*, *Hartley*, and I might add many great

and honourable names in America, as the late Governor *Bowdoin*, who, though a great astronomer, and lover of the sciences, yet professed and desired to be an humble follower of the meek and lowly *Jesus*. The present governor of Massachusetts, Mr. *Adams*, is not only a great politician, and has been from the beginning of the contest, a steady friend to liberty, but is moreover a *Christian*; bears that most honourable name; and I hope and trust, most of our excellent rulers in America are of the same stamp; and especially, the great, the highly esteemed, and renowned WASHINGTON; this truly great and good man, this father of his people, is not ashamed of *christianity*. And I wish I could add to the list, Mr. *Thomas Paine*, that great political writer, who wrote *Common Sense*, *the Rights of Man*, &c. but alas! his *Age of Reason* forbids me that pleasure! O had he kept to politics, and not attempted to meddle with religion, until he understood something about it!

Your objection to christianity would be something specious, if you could, besides proving the plurality of inhabited worlds, prove that the inhabitants of them have sinned, and are miserable as well as we; but until this is done, all that you have said about "the solitary and strange conceit that the Almighty, who had millions of worlds under his protection, should leave the care of all the rest, and come to die in one world, because one man and one woman had eaten an apple;" will go but a very little way towards overthrowing the Christian system. For as I firmly believe, that sin and misery are only to be found in this part of the system where we dwell, and know that you cannot prove to the contrary; I cannot but adore my Creator, who sent *Jesus Christ*, here to live, die, and rise again, to cure the evil which existed no where else but here. I believe that but a small proportion of the creatures formed by the Divine hand, ever did or ever will rebel against their Creator; but I

am astonished at the greatness of that love and goodness, which chose to restore fallen intelligences, rather than to destroy them; though it is very obvious, even to the weakest reason, that God could have destroyed the whole human race in an instant, by cutting off the first parents of mankind, as soon as they had sinned, before the conception of any of their children; and this he would no doubt have done, if he had not intended to redeem and restore their sons and daughters. We ought never to cast reflections upon our Creator, because he has had so much kindness towards us, and our little world, as to aim at our recovery, rather than at our destruction; and in this view of the matter, the more we believe in the plurality of worlds, the more important and interesting will the Christian system appear to us, which discovers a plan of redemption for the fallen inhabitants of our globe, and shews us that our all-wise, infinitely powerful, and gracious Creator, did neither forget nor abandon us, though he had so many millions of worlds under his care and protection, and though we by our sins, had rendered ourselves unworthy of his notice.

So that you cannot but see, that these two great ideas mutually strengthen each other; the Great Creator having millions of worlds under his care and protection, yet having such love to all his creatures, that when a part of the inhabitants of one system had rebelled, rather than abandon them to ruin, he sent his Son to redeem and restore them.

If you had considered this subject as you ought, and had read the scriptures with any attention, you need not have asked, "Are we to suppose that every world in the boundless creation, had an *Eve*, an apple, a serpent, and a Redeemer? In this case, the person who is irreverently called the Son of God, and sometimes God himself, would have nothing else to do than to travel from world to world, in an endless succession of

death, with scarcely a momentary interval of life." No, sir, for no part of the universe but this needed restoring, and therefore hither the Saviour came. The Scriptures call him the *Son*, and sometimes *the only begotten Son of God*, which is his proper distinction; this cannot be irreverently done, for the sacred writings always speak of God and his *Christ* with the highest possible reverence. No person that believes the scriptures, can for a moment imagine that *Christ* can ever die a second time; nothing is more expressly contrary to the word of revelation than such a notion.

St. *Paul* says, "Knowing that *Christ*, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." Rom. vi. 9, 10.

And our Saviour said to St. *John*, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, amen; and have the keys of hell and death." Rev. i. 18. See also, Heb. ix. 24—28. Chap. x. 10—14.

It is therefore plain from the scripture, that *Christ* could die but once; and as he died on this globe, there is not the least reason to conclude that the inhabitants of other systems are such fallen, miserable creatures as we are; and until this be proved, the plan of redemption can never be weakened, far less overthrown by the belief of the plurality of worlds.

I am in sincerity,

Your friend and well-wisher.

LET-

LETTER IX.

SIR,

ALLOWING your representation of the imperfection and change of written and verbal language to be just, and that *it is impossible to translate out of one language into another, not only without losing a great part of the original, but frequently mistaking the sense*: how can you account for the following very astonishing fact, viz. That our English translation under all these disadvantages, should contain in plain, clear expressions, all those bright characters of the Deity, which you, after much searching, are able to find in the great and infallible book of the creation? For you have not pointed out one single perfection of God, but what I can find in our translation of the scriptures. I have mentioned this in another place, and I desire it may be particularly noticed; for if this is true, as all attentive readers must perceive, then is not only the truth and authority of the scriptures established, by the clear revelation made therein of the characters of God, exactly similar to what may be read in the great book of creation, and which will incontestibly prove, that he that formed the one, dictated the other; but here is your impossibility realized as a fact, a translation that certainly has not lost a great part of the original in this respect; since from this translation, every perfection of God may be learned, that you or any one can learn from the great book of nature. Does the power of God appear in the immensity of the creation? the scriptures abundantly proclaim the same attribute. "Power belongeth unto God." Psalm lxii. 11.

"Who by his strength setteth fast the mountains, being girded with power." Psalm lxv. 6.

"He ruleth by his power for ever." Psalm lxvi. 7.

"Nevertheless,

"Nevertheless, he saved them for his name's sake; that he might make his mighty power to be known." Psalm cvi. 8.

"He hath shewed his people the power of his works." Psalm cxi. 6.

"Praise him in the firmament of his power." Psalm cl. 1.

"He hath made the earth by his power." Jer. x. 12. li. 15.

"So will we sing and praise thy power." Psalm xxi. 13.

"Through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee." Psalm lxvi. 3.

"They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power." Psalm cxlv. 11.

"Does his wisdom appear in the beautiful order by which the whole creation is governed; so the scriptures declare the wisdom of Jehovah.

"He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength." Job ix. 4.

"Yet he also is wise, and will not call back his words," Isaiah xxxi. 2.

"Behold, God is mighty, and despiseth not any; he is mighty in strength and wisdom." Job x. xxvi. 5.

"O *Jehovah*, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches." Psalm civ. 24.

"To him that by wisdom made the heavens," &c. Psalm cxxxvi. 5.

"The Lord by wisdom hath founded the earth; by understanding he hath established the heavens." Prov. iii. 19.

"He hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heavens by his discretion." Jer. x. 12. li. 15.

"Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his. He giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge unto them that know understanding." Dan. ii. 20, 21.

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge

ledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! Rom. xi. 33.

Do we see the munificence and goodness of God in the abundance with which he fills the earth? we shall find the same in our translation of the scriptures.

“O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.” 1 Chron. xvi. 34. 2 Chron. v. 13. vii. 3. Ezra iii. 11. Psalm c. 5. cvi. 1. cvii. 1. cxviii. 1 and 29. cxxxv. 3. cxxxvi. cxlv. 9.

This last cited passage is, “JEHOVAH is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.” See also Jer. xxxiii. 11. Lam. iii. 25. Nahum i. 7.

The scriptures even in our translation, so abound with express declarations of the goodness of God, that his name in our tongue, GOD, varies but little from the word *good*. So that it is impossible that the book of creation should express this perfection of the Deity more fully than the scriptures do.

Are we able to contemplate the mercy of God, in his not withholding the abundance of his blessings from the unthankful? Turn to the scriptures, even in our translation, and you will find that even the *poor, ignorant, modest Jesus* as you represent him, speaks of God as sustaining this character in perfection: and invites us to imitate him in our conduct, as I noticed in my first letter. See St. Matt. v. 43—48. St. Luke vi. 27—37.

And as for the declarations of his mercy, they are to be found in such great abundance in the Bible, that I shall not pretend to cite the passages, being more than two hundred and fifty in number, but shall only refer to about forty verses where he is praised because of his mercy for ever, or which endureth for ever. 1 Chron. xvi. 34, 41. 2 Chron. v. 13, vii. 3, 6. xx. 21. Ezra iii. 11. Psalm cvi, 1. cvii. 1. Psalm cxviii. 1, 2, 3, 4. Psalm cxxxvi 1, &c. to 26. Jer. xxxiii. 11. The mercy
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and goodness of God are some of those subjects that as a kind of vein run through the whole Bible, and the passages where these declarations are found, are too numerous to be even referred to.

In fine, whatever you can read in the book of creation, respecting the existence of God, and his characters, I can read in the scriptures; and consequently the Bible must be a book of divine revelation, since it certainly contains in the plainest expressions, every declaration that is evident by the glorious works of creation.

The substance of the Lecture which you say the Almighty Lecturer hath given us in the structure of the universe, "I have made an earth for man to dwell upon, and I have rendered the starry heavens visible, to teach him science and the arts. He can now provide for his own comfort, *and learn from my munificence to all, to be kind to each other;*" may be found in the scriptures "I have made the earth, and created man upon it: I, even my hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded." Isaiah xlv. 12.

"I have made the earth, the man, and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power, and by my stretched-out arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me." Jer. xxvii. 5.

"For thus saith the Lord, that created the heavens, God himself, that formed the earth, and made it, he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited; I am JEHOVAH, and there is none else." Isaiah xlv. 18.

"Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord." Isaiah lxvi. 1, 2.

The scriptures abundantly declare God to be the Creator of heaven and earth, men and beasts, and all things; and as for kindness

kindness, and love one towards another, many chapters are filled up with hardly any thing else.

To do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God; to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world, is that true religion, which is recommended in the scriptures, and which certainly comprehends all the morality which you have ever found taught in the book of creation.

Thus far the book of creation and the book of revelation teach the same things, and cannot be set up in any wise against each other; for I might as well pretend to prove by the Bible, that the creation is not the work of God, as you to prove by the works of God, that the scriptures were not written by his direction. Therefore, all that you say of the excellent lessons that may be learned by the works of creation, only confirms the truth of the scriptures where those same lessons are so plainly written, that he that runs may read.

But O how far the sacred writings go beyond any thing that can be pretended to be learnt from the works of creation! This I have just barely hinted before, but being a matter of great importance, I will mention it again. Nothing can be more evident than that mankind in general have been, and are guilty of many sins against their Creator, themselves, and their neighbours. The heathen poets and philosophers, plainly beheld and declared, that man was a weak, sinful, and miserable creature, and that God could never have made him such as he now is; but by what means he came into this miserable state, they could not tell; and were very doubtful whether God could or would pardon the crimes of his creatures, and restore them to divine favour and happiness. Neither could they tell by the works of nature, nor by their own reason, whether man was to be a subject of immortality or not; all their conclusions on this head seemed short of assurance; and as for the resurrection of the body, they neither believed nor hoped any such thing.

thing. But the scriptures give us the fullest information and assurance upon all these and a great variety of important subjects, that we never could obtain the least knowledge of by the book of creation. In the Bible, we learn all that creation can teach us, and a hundred times more, both what God is, and what our duty towards him is ; what we ourselves have been, now are, and shall be ; what our personal, relative, and social duties are ; what we ought to avoid as crimes, and what to practise as virtues. These, and many other important questions, may be answered by the scriptures, and by no other book ; in this respect, God has *magnified his word above all his name.*

It is plain, from the history of all ages, that those nations that have had only the book of creation to read, have been either stupid Atheists, or gross idolators, and have generally abandoned themselves to most abominable impieties, and the worst of crimes. And the description given by St. Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, of the idolatrous nations of his time, may serve for all periods. After mentioning their idolatry, and their unnatural crimes, he adds, " And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient : being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness ; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity ; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." Rom. i. 28—31.

Since it appears, that the light of nature and reason has not been sufficiently strong to prevent or cure these moral disorders of the mind, and to banish darkness and ignorance from the understandings of the children of men ; what cause have we to bless God, who has given us the Bible, which has already
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done a thousand times more towards reforming mankind, enlightening their minds, and making them good members of society, than all other means that ever were used besides. And the influence is but small yet, in comparison to what it shall be hereafter, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the seas. I am willing to let the merit of the book of divine revelation be determined by its effects and consequences upon the hearts, lives, tempers, conversation and conduct of those who truly believe it, and make it their constant rule in all things. I hope you may be an exception, but I never yet knew a professed Deist a moral man; being generally guilty of profanity, drunkenness, passion, pride, uncleanness, or some other scandalous vice; and generally *intolerable bigots*, despisers of all other people, haters of serious men. And if there is ever another persecution against christianity, I think there is nothing more likely, than that the Deists will be the persecutors. The sect of the Sadducees, who denied all the scriptures, except the five books of *Moses*, denied the existence of angels and spirits, the resurrection of the dead, and a future state, were the first, and almost the only persecutors of the Christians among the Jews; and as the Deists of our time are very nearly of their sentiments, and are much upon the increasing hand, the only danger of persecution is from them alone; for I am persuaded, that popery will never raise its head again.

If this little attempt of mine should have any success, I shall no doubt be exposed to the scorn, contempt, and ridicule of that scoffing generation, whose mildest words, when speaking against *Jesus* and his religion, are more bitter than gall and wormwood, as I have frequently witnessed in my conversation with them; but I trust that I shall soon be far beyond their reach, in that land where the wicked shall cease from troubling, and where the weary are at rest. And in the mean time, I

hope to shew that *I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ*; not ashamed to believe it as a man, to confess and profess it as a Christian, to preach it as a minister, to contend for it as a soldier, and to suffer for it as a martyr.

I would not be ashamed, 1. Because it is the gospel, good news, glad tidings of great joy. 2. It is true, and admits of full proof that it is so. 3. The gospel is news respecting *Christ*, who was not ashamed to suffer for me, and I hope never to be ashamed of him before men. 4. The gospel is news of the highest importance. 5. It is of universal concern to all. 6. It is published by the highest authority, even that of God himself; and 7. Because it has evidently changed those men much for the better, who have received and obeyed it.

V I cannot but hope, that as you was such a friend to the Bible, when you wrote *Common Sense*; that your *Deism* is but of late date, and that you will be candid enough to read that book once more, attentively, and see if the evidence of its truth, goodness, and importance, will not be sufficient to make you ashamed of having declared, that *it would be more consistent, that we called it the word of a demon, than the word of God.*

By all that ever I could learn, hear or observe, respecting Deists, their religion is not sufficiently powerful, to enable them to pay that homage to their Creator, which some of them confess to be his due, nor to correct those vices in themselves, which they acknowledge ought not to be practised, nor to support an uniform character of benevolence towards men in general; and especially, *Deism* is not capable of giving that satisfaction, comfort, peace, joy, and assurance to its professors as christianity is. I am acquainted with a Christian minister in America, who was, for a number of years, a zealous Deist, and belonged to a club of the same stamp; but he never could find, that *Deism* could either give him power over his vices, or inward peace and satisfaction of mind: but he
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thought that perhaps it was from not attending sufficiently to his religion. The president of the club was a great man, and a mighty adept in Deism, and this man determined to ask, and accordingly did ask him, as a friend, to tell him sincerely, whether his religion did give him full satisfaction or not, and whether he thought Deism capable of giving it to the mind of man? He answered, that it doubtless would, if any could live up to it, but (cursing himself) said, he could not live up to it, so far as to find any comfort therein. This answer (which I believe might be given by the best of the Deists) effectually turned the man, and made him resolve to try what satisfaction could be found in christianity, since he could not expect to find any in Deism, as the president of the society himself could find none, though he had long been a professor and propagator of those sentiments.

I have often wondered what could induce Deists, upon their own principles, to be so zealous to propagate their opinions. They would rob us of our hope, joy, comfort, and assurance: and what can they give us in return? nothing but darkness, doubt, uncertainty, fear, anxiety, faint hopes, and despair. According to some that I have discoursed with, we know nothing of a future state, any more than beasts. Others imagine that we shall be changed into some sort of animals, and so come again into the world. While others declare, that this is our only state of existence, and that we ought now to eat and drink, and enjoy all the delights of which our senses are capable, indulging ourselves in all kinds of lusts, for tomorrow we shall die, and be as though we had never been. But some, not quite so far gone, suppose there may be a future state, where all, immediately upon their death, shall enjoy equal happiness: *Nero and Paul, the cruel murderer and the innocent victim.* This idea leads to infidelity, for it makes fools of all the prophets, apostles, and martyrs, who have suffered
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in the cause of God; for they had certain loss which they might have avoided, and no gain to counterbalance. While some others, like yourself, *trouble not themselves about the manner of future existence.*

You say, "I content myself with believing, even to positive conviction, that the power that gave me existence, is able to continue it in any form and manner that he pleases, either with or without this body; and it appears more probable to me, that I shall continue to exist hereafter, than that I should have had existence as I now have before that existence began."

This is one of the most comfortable passages in your book; and yet, O how gloomy and melancholy are your highest hopes, compared to those of a true Christian! O my friend, could you but know the joy and happiness that even I myself feel, in the certain prospects of what divine revelation holds forth, as the portion of believers in a future state, you would not wonder at the earnest wish I have, that you might know and enjoy the same. "We know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." "We are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." 2 Cor. v. 1, 8.

Our Saviour's words afford us most amazing comfort, "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." St. John xiv. 2, 3.

"Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord *Jesus Christ*; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like to his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself." Phil. iii. 20, 21.

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"For if we believe that *Jesus* died, and rose again, even so them also who sleep in *Jesus*, will God bring with him. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in *Christ* shall rise first. Then we (true believers) who are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thess. iv. 14, 16, 17.

We have scores of such blessed promises as these in the scriptures, which give us who believe and obey the gospel, full assurance of these three things, 1st, Happiness, rest, and peace immediately after death: 2d, The resurrection of our bodies to glory and immortality, by *Christ* at his coming: 3d, permanent joy, and the highest felicity in his presence, to continue as long as he shall exist. "Because I live, ye shall live also". St. John xiv. 19.

These are the prospects which revelation gives; and which you reject for the uncertain hopes of modern Deism: wiser far would be the man who should exchange the richest pearls and diamonds for common pebbles, and mountains of gold for grains of sand.

Therefore I have three capital objections against Deism, which have been all mentioned in this letter.

I. It gives us but a very small part of the information which we obtain from divine revelation; the Bible alone containing all that can be learned from the creation, respecting God, his perfections, our duty towards him, ourselves, and mankind, and much more, so as to be a complete rule of faith and practice; especially, Deism gives us no idea respecting the pardon of sin, nor directions how to obtain salvation: but the scriptures give us all the satisfaction upon these important subjects that we could possibly desire.

II. Deism, as far as I could ever observe, never changes
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men for the better, neither makes them pious towards God, nor benevolent towards men; gives them no power over their vices, and does not enable them to practise those personal, relative, and social duties, and exalted virtues, which are the highest ornaments of human nature: but true believers in *Christ*, who give up themselves to his service, gain the victory over all their lusts, passions and vices, and find, through *Christ* that strengtheneth them, that they can do all things which he commandeth them, with ease and pleasure. They can even obey from the heart, that most difficult command, *Love your enemies, do good to them who hate you: bless them that curse you, and pray for them who despitefully use you.* If this commandment can be kept, as I know it may, by divine assistance, there can be no difficulty in any of the rest. "For this is the love of God that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous". 1 John v. 3.

"And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." Chap. ii. 3, 4.

I would not preach or write in favour of any religion, that did not tend to make men better, as well as wiser; but true christianity doth each of these things.

III. Modern Deism gives us little or no hopes of futurity; all is dark, uncertain, gloomy, and mere conjecture; enough to fill men with anxiety, doubt and despair: but revelation gives us the promise of future happiness, the resurrection of our bodies, and endless felicity. And among a vast number of important reasons, for which our Saviour died publicly upon a cross, and rose again, this was one; that he might fully confirm the promises he had given to his followers, of the resurrection to eternal life. This was highly worthy of him, and if he had no other view in dying publicly, (which he had) this

this would have been sufficient: for he had preached the resurrection from the dead, and a future state of felicity, and therefore, it well became him to suffer, and to enter into his glory; that thereby he might infallibly prove, even to demonstration, the truth of his doctrine, and give the highest assurance to all his followers. Viewed in this light, the death of *Christ* on the cross, does not seem such a *gloomy subject*, as you would represent it; but connected with his resurrection, one of the most glorious sights that ever was exhibited: the triumph of our Saviour over sin and death, and the certain earnest proof of our immortal felicity.

I am with respect,

Yours, &c.

LETTER X.

SIR,

IN this letter, which I intend shall be the last, I shall just take up a few things in your performance, that as yet I have made no remarks upon, and say a few words upon each, and so draw to a conclusion.

I purposely omitted speaking any thing of the miraculous conception of *Christ*, until I had proved his resurrection from the dead, and his ascension into heaven, as also the truth of divine revelation. But having done this, I have a right, upon your own principles, to vindicate the honour of my Saviour, and the virginity of his mother. For I think you seem to allow, that the resurrection and ascension of *Jesus*, if they had been visible facts, would have given sanction to that which

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from the nature of things could not have been evident in the same manner: for you say, speaking of the ascension, "And as the public visibility of this last related act was the only evidence that could give sanction to the former part, the whole of it falls to the ground, because the evidence never was given." But I am happy to be able to turn the tables upon you, by reversing your words. The resurrection and ascension of *Jesus*, being fully proved by many infallible proofs, his miraculous conception and birth cannot be denied, because the evidence was given by those visible facts.

And besides, allowing the scriptures to be true, which I think I have proved, both in the historical and prophetical parts, there may be considerable evidence given of the miraculous conception of *Jesus* the *Messiah*.

I shall say what I have upon my mind on this subject, under the four following heads: 1. The possibility of it. 2. Prophecies respecting it. 3. The historical account. 4. Collateral evidence tending to corroborate it.

I hope none will be so foolish and presumptuous as to deny the possibility of such a conception: for certainly he that made all worlds and all things, and made man of the dust, and breathed into him the breath of lives, and caused him to become a living soul, and made woman out of one of the ribs of man, could certainly create this *new thing* in the earth. For as you yourself allow, that "To an almighty power it is no more difficult to make a million of worlds than to make one;" so by the same parity of reasoning, it was no more difficult for him to produce the miraculous conception and birth of *Jesus*, than any other thing in nature.

When *Mary* asked the angel that announced to her that she should be the mother of the Saviour of the world, "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" his answer was enough to satisfy the most doubtful mind, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon

upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also, that holy thing that shall be born of thee, shall be called, The Son of God. And behold, thy cousin *Elisabeth*, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible." St. Luke i. 34—37.

This same answer was given, when a child was promised to *Sarah* in her old age, and she laughed at the idea, through her unbelief, thinking it impossible, according to the course of nature: "The Lord said unto *Abraham*, Wherefore did *Sarah* laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, who am old? Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" Gen. xviii. 13, 14. And the same to the prophet *Jeremiah*, when he thought it strange, that the Lord should order him to buy an inheritance in a land whose inhabitants were just upon the point of being led captive into a far distant country, without the least probability of ever returning to their possessions again; but God said, "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh; is there any thing too hard for me?" Jer. xxxii. 27.

And our Saviour said to his disciples, in the case of the amazing difficulty of the rich man's entering into the kingdom of heaven, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible." Or as another evangelist expresses it, "The things which are impossible with men, are possible with God." See St. Matt. xix. 26. St. Mark x. 27. St. Luke xviii. 27. And this may be given as a sufficient answer in all cases of difficulty; and as you allow that God possesses almighty power, I need not add any thing more to you, to prove the possibility of the miraculous conception of *Jesus*.

II. The prophecies relating to this event, plainly shew, that his conception was miraculous, and different from that of other men. The first prophecy of a Redeemer, speaks of him as *the seed of the woman*, that should bruise the serpent's head,

head, Gen. iii. 15. and why this expression so singular should be used, unless his conception was intended to be different from that of other men, I cannot conceive. It is plain that *Eve* understood that he who was promised as *the seed of the woman*, was to be divine, as well as human; God, as well as man: for when she brought forth her first-born son, she said, according to the Hebrew original, I have gotten (AISH ATH JEHOVAH) A man, The JEHOVAH.

In the prophecy of *Isaiah*, we read; "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name *Immanuel*." *Isaiah* vii. 14.

And if this passage should be excepted against on account of any circumstances, there is one in the prophecy of *Jeremiah* that cannot be excepted against, nor its force evaded. "How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for JEHOVAH hath created a new thing in the earth, a woman shall compass a man." *Jer.* xxxi. 22. This was spoken of in the prophetic language and style, as a thing already done, to shew its certainty, and great importance. It is declared to be a new thing in the earth, that never was known before, and that should be entirely singular in its kind, that *A woman should compass a man*. This speaks plainly of the miraculous conception of our Lord, which was indeed *a new thing in the earth*, and was the wonderful work of creating power; and it shall in due time fix the attention of the most giddy of the human race, that they shall go astray and wander no more. Thus the prophecies being proved genuine, by many of them having already been fulfilled, and being now fulfilling before our eyes, and these plainly predicting the miraculous conception; it will follow that it must certainly be true. If it be said, That the prophecies which speak of this great thing are but few; I would answer, that a circumstance once foretold, is as certain of being accomplished, as though

though it was mentioned often. The place of *Christ's* birth was but once foretold, yet the scribes knew from that prophecy where he should be born. And even the resurrection of *Christ*, that most important event, was only plainly foretold in one passage. And the same may be said of most of the circumstances of his life and death, and yet they were all punctually fulfilled.

III. The history of this affair is told as regularly and circumstantially as any thing need to be.

There is, first, an account of the conception of *John* the Baptist, when his parents were aged; accompanied with prophecies that he should be the forerunner of the Messiah. Then in the sixth month of his conception, the angel *Gabriel* was sent to a virgin of the name of *Mary*, belonging to the house of *David*, descended from him by the line of his son *Nathan*: *Mary* was espoused to a man of the name of *Joseph*, descended from the same house by the line of *Solomon*. The angel announced to her that she should be the mother of the Saviour of mankind, and satisfied her doubts of the possibility of it, by informing her of a cause sufficient to produce so great an effect; and to confirm her the more, informs her that *Elisabeth* had conceived a son in her old age, though she had been barren all her days before, which was almost as great wonder, as that which was promised to *Mary*; laying it down as a maxim, that nothing was impossible with God. At the hearing of which, the blessed virgin resigned herself to the disposal of her Creator, saying, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy words." The angel then departed from her: and she arose, and went into the hill country, to visit *Elisabeth*; their meeting was joyful; their very words are recorded, and are so beautiful in their kind, that they have never been excelled. *Mary* abode there in the utmost quietness and peace for about three months, seeming under no fear nor trouble

trouble respecting her situation ; then she returned to her own house ; all this time discovering no anxiety about the consummation of her marriage, nor taking any methods to clear her character, nor to fly from disgrace and death. At length *Joseph* discovers that she was with child, and knowing that it was not by him, intended to put her away ; but being a just and merciful man, and not choosing to disgrace her publicly, still less to have her put to death, he purposed to dismiss and divorce her as privately as possible. “ But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, *Joseph*, thou son of *David*, fear not to take unto thee *Mary* thy wife ; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name *JESUS*, for he shall save his people from their sins.” *Joseph* being thus fully satisfied, respecting the conception of the divine infant, and being raised from sleep, did as the angel had bidden him, and wedded his espoused wife. And for some time they continued at Nazareth, far from Bethlehem, where the *Messiah* was to be born ; and as I have before observed, did not seem to have the least thoughts of going to that town, from whence the family of *David* sprang. But the great *Augustus* now made, or newly enforced a decree, that all his subjects should, by a set time, repair to their native cities or places, there to be enrolled. This caused *Joseph* and *Mary* to repair to Bethlehem ; but finding the inn full of those who had come upon the same errand, they could not obtain lodging there. The scripture says, they went into the stable, *because there was no room for them in the inn*: though you (affecting to be wise above what is written) say, *Christ's parents were extremely poor, as appears from their not being able to pay for a bed when he was born*. But I suppose, most travellers have seen inns at times, so full that they could not obtain a bed, even though they were able

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to pay for it. And this is especially the case in the eastern countries, where the inns are not provided with beds, for the accommodation of travellers, but they are obliged to carry their bedding with them; so that it was not a *bed*, but *room* in the inn, that *Joseph* and *Mary* wanted.

This is the history of the miraculous incarnation, and birth of *Jesus*, as taken from the accounts given by St. *Matthew* and St. *Luke*, at the beginning of their gospels; and it appears to be as fairly and as particularly told as could be desired; and to me it seems to carry every mark of truth and authenticity upon the very face of it.

IV. There are also several circumstances tending to confirm the idea of the miraculous conception.

1. The testimony of *Elizabeth*, thus expressed, "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me! For lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that believed, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord."

2. The song of *Mary* herself, which does not sound like the language of a woman who had been guilty of incontinence, and stood exposed to shame and death; but as of one who was fully assured that the conception was miraculous. "My soul doth magnify the Lord; and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the lowliness of his hand-maiden: for behold, from henceforth, all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty, hath done to me great things; and holy is his name," &c.

3. The appearance of the angels to the shepherds, is another strong corroborating proof of the truth of the miraculous conception; for it can hardly be supposed, that the shepherds should have come to seek the Babe in the stable and in
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the manger, unless they had seen a heavenly vision, directing them. Nor can it be imagined, that simple shepherds should have invented such an uncommon story, even if they had known that a poor infant was that night born in a stable in Bethlehem; for what possible end could they have in view? could they expect riches, honours, or preferments? these they neither desired, nor had reason to hope for. But least of all can it be thought, that all heaven would be moved to proclaim and celebrate the birth of —, I will not name what. But the birth of *Jesus* was celebrated in the most glorious manner, therefore was he, as was necessary for him, conceived without sin. The account given by St. *Luke* is far too grand and animated ever to have been invented by any man, far less by simple shepherds; and therefore they were chosen to be eye and ear-witnesses of the joyful scene, that there should not be the smallest room for suspicion. And indeed the whole appears so heavenly, and consequently so natural and consistent, that it carries its own evidence with it. How sublime and ravishing the words of the angel! “Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of *David*, a Saviour, who is *Christ* the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling-clothes, lying in a manger.” While he spake, suddenly he was joined by a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men!” The shepherds having seen and found every circumstance exactly corresponding to what they had been informed of, published these things abroad: or St. *Luke* would never have dared to put them into his account.

4. Another circumstance of this kind, is the united testimony of *Simeon* and *Anna*, who came into the temple, just at the

the time when *Jesus* was brought in to be dedicated to God. *Simeon* was a just and devout man, who was waiting for the consolation of *Israel*, the coming of the *Messiah*; and the spirit of God was upon him; and it had been revealed to him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's *Christ*. And when the child *Jesus* was brought in, the good old man took him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people *Israel*." *Anna*, a pious widow, who had attended upon the temple service, and had served God in the most devout manner, night and day, for more than fourscore years, coming in at that time, gave thanks unto the Lord, and spake of him, that is, of *Jesus*, to all them that looked for redemption in *Jerusalem*.

St. *Luke* declares that these testimonies were given publicly in the temple before the people, which he would never have dared to assert thus boldly, if it had not been so: and if the matters were truly so, then is the miraculous conception true.

5. The coming of the wise men from the east to *Jerusalem*, to seek, find, and adore the infant Saviour, is a wonderful attestation of the same truth. And many others might be added, but I forbear; for, indeed, the evidence is so full and satisfactory, that (allowing the scripture history to be true, and the resurrection and ascension of *Jesus* to be undeniable facts, which I have before proved) I cannot see with what colour the miraculous conception of our Saviour *Jesus Christ* can be denied. See St. *Matt.* i. ii. St. *Luke* i. ii. which four chapters are chiefly taken up with this important subject, and those matters that stand connected therewith.

As for the account of the creation and fall of man, which you endeavour to render so ridiculous, I shall only observe upon it, that if we reject the short, simple, plain, clear and instructive history given us in the three first chapters of *Genesis*; we must remain entirely ignorant of things that are highly important and interesting, and of which I should suppose every thinking man would wish to be informed; and I should imagine that a wise and good God would not fail to give us the best possible information upon that head. And if this information is not found in the Bible, we must despair of finding it elsewhere; for the oldest writings in the world besides the scriptures, make no pretensions to the antiquity of the writings of *Moses*. And the accounts they give us of these subjects, are no more to be compared with the scripture account, either for clearness or consistency, than a candle is to the sun for light and brightness.

The many dreadful and horrid reflections that you make upon the sufferings and death of *Jesus*, and especially upon the doctrine of *redemption through his blood*, might give occasion for much more to be written upon those subjects, than I have written altogether: but as I expect that abler pens than mine will be employed against your *Age of Reason*; I doubt not but some of them will defend that part of the Christian system: which I have endeavoured to do in some other of my publications, and I shall be willing to enter the lists with you upon this subject also, if the public appear to desire it.

This one doctrine of the gospel, viz. *salvation through a crucified Redeemer*, is that of which St. *Paul* informs us, was in his time, *a stumbling block to the Jews, and foolishness to the Greeks*; and so it remains to the *Deists* of these latter ages. But as *Christ* had many designs in dying on the cross so a number of them are such as reason itself will not hesitate to approve of, As.

1. That the scriptures of the prophecies, that predicted his sufferings,

sufferings, wounds and death, might be fulfilled; this is the only reason given by the evangelists, in the account they give us of his sufferings. And this was of great importance, for if any of the prophecies had fallen to the ground, the evidence of divine revelation would have been greatly weakened.

2. To confirm his doctrine, by sealing his testimony with his blood.

3. To sympathize in his death with his brethren of the human race, who were subject to death.

4. To set and leave us an example, that we should follow his steps: that is much insisted upon by St. *Peter* in his first epistle.

5. But especially, that glorious design of the death and resurrection of *Christ*, which I mentioned in my last letter, is what reason must approve of: for this grand design of *abolishing death, and bringing life and immortality to light*, was worthy of him; and no greater evidence of its truth could have been reasonably desired, than has been given by his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. And it is abundantly evident by the proofs of these two latter facts, that his designs in suffering death were great, important, and worthy of God. And if you cannot yet bear to look upon all the reasons which the scriptures give for his sufferings, and especially upon that of *redemption through the blood of the cross*, be careful not to reject that event, in which reason may certainly observe the beauty and importance of the five designs mentioned above. And if you should ever come to feel and know your fallen estate, you would then rejoice to believe in that glorious Redeemer who *was wounded for our transgressions; and who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.* Till then I would wish you to suspend your judgment, and as

far as you can approve, but do not condemn what you do not understand.

You have endeavoured, by a little ridicule, to overthrow the miracle of *Jonah's* being swallowed by a large fish, and being kept alive for some time there and afterwards delivered. *Is this too hard for God?* More than infinite power can perform? Some suppose the account not true, because none of those fishes that we commonly call *whales* are found in the Mediterranean; but if such persons knew that the eastern nations are accustomed to call any large fishes, *whales*, and any considerable collection of waters, *seas*, they might spare themselves the folly of such weak remarks. There are fishes enough in the Mediterranean of the shark kind, that have sufficient throats to swallow a man whole, and bellies large enough to hold him. And I believe Almighty power is both able to cause a fish to swallow a man, and to preserve the man alive in his belly part of three nights and days, and then to command the fish to bring him so near to the shore as to cast him out upon dry land. If God *can* perform this, it will be hard for you to prove that he *did not*; especially as the prophet by refusing to obey the divine message which he had received, and attempting to avoid the presence of God, or to go so far off that he could not be sent to Nineveh, gave the highest possible occasion and provocation to the Deity, to exert his power to stop and disappoint *Jonah*, and yet to preserve him, humble him, and at length cause him to go and deliver the message that was sent by him to the Ninevites, which was attended with most surprising effects. I can see nothing ridiculous, or unworthy of God. When I first heard this part of your book read, I said, "If there is any wit in that ridicule, I must acknowledge that I have not enough to see it."

I have frequently heard and read this miracle of *Jonah's* being swallowed by the fish, ridiculed, denied, or explained away,

away, by infidels, Deists, and even professing Christians; but I never heard any object to, or dispute, or attempt to ridicule those great miracles recorded in the book of *Daniel*; the preservation of the three men in the fiery furnace, into which they were cast by the command of the king of Babylon, for refusing to bow down to his golden image; and that of *Daniel* himself in the den of lions, who was cast there for making supplication to JEHOVAH. These were as great miracles as the preservation of *Jonah*, and the first seems far more astonishing; but then these were done before the kings of Chaldaea, and Media, and Persia, and in the presence of all their nobles, and many thousands of their subjects; and the peculiar circumstances were such, that a thinking man could about as soon disbelieve the Being and perfections of a God, as refuse his assent to the belief of those most wonderful miracles after a serious consideration of the cases, as stated in Dan. iii. and vi. And besides, these miracles occasioned two public decrees or edicts, registered and published through the vast dominions of those kings, stating and attesting these astonishing displays of Almighty power, so publicly made known; and forbidding all their subjects, under pain of death, to speak any thing amiss of such a God, commanding them to tremble and fear before him; since none but he could deliver them after such a sort.

But though the account of *Jonah* had not all those remarkable circumstances to corroborate it, as the above-mentioned miracles had; yet those who pay any considerable regard to the person and character of *Christ*, can have no more doubt of *Jonah's* being swallowed by a fish, than of any other fact; because the Saviour himself often mentioned it, and alluded to it, which he would not have done, if it had not been true; and therefore in refusing to believe it, the character of *Jesus* is set at nought. The following quotations are therefore made for
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the confutation of those who profess to be Christians, and yet join with you in ridiculing this piece of scripture history.

St. Matt. xii. 38, 39, 40, 41. "Then certain of the scribes and of the pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said to them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet *Jonas*. For as *Jonas* was three days and three nights in the whale's (or fish's) belly, so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of *Jonas*: and behold, a greater than *Jonas* is here."

St. Matt. xvi. 4. "A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet *Jonas*."

St. Luke xi. 29, 30, 32. "And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign, and there shall be no sign given to it, but the sign of *Jonas* the prophet. For as *Jonas* was a sign to the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of Man be to this generation. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of *Jonas*, and behold, a greater than *Jonas* is here."

So people must either believe the history of *Jonah*, as related in the scripture; or must judge the Saviour an ignorant person, or an impostor, or that the evangelists assure us, that he said what he did not. For my own part, I shall choose the first, let others do as they will.

The history of *Jonah*, and his being imprisoned in the belly of the fish, was typical of our Saviour's death and burial; and his coming out alive, was a figure of our Lord's resurrection; consequently,

consequently, those who laugh at the former, must reject the latter; and this but ill becomes Christians.

After the many proofs of real miracles, which I have drawn from the scriptures, far more than barely enough to prove divine revelation, it is hardly worth my while to notice what you have said, respecting what you call *the most extraordinary of all things, called miracles, in the New Testament, that of the devil flying away with Jesus Christ, &c.* I do not know that this was ever called a miracle by any author before yourself, and the New Testament does not say that *the devil flew away with Jesus Christ*; there were other methods of taking him from place to place, besides that of flying. But as *Jesus* suffered himself to be tempted by the prince of the power of the air, he doubtless gave him a fair opportunity of trying all his arts, by which he has so often prevailed over mankind, but by which he could not prevail in the least degree over our Redeemer. *Satan* tempts mankind without appearing visibly to them, because they have that tinder within them, upon which the sparks of his temptations too often light with success; but as the prince of this age, or the devil, had nothing in *Christ*, as he says, "The prince of this world (or age) cometh, and hath nothing in me;" St. *John* xiv. 30. so, doubtless, in order to tempt him, *Satan* appeared in a visible form, and spake to him in an audible voice, or else I cannot see how he could tempt *Christ* at all, which he certainly did: for *Jesus* "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Heb. iv. 15.

Some have imagined that the highest pinnacle of the temple, was like the top of the spire of a church steeple, and therefore object to the relation on that account, supposing that *Christ* and *Satan* could not in person have stood there together: but the highest pinnacle, was only the very lofty battlement, where people might stand, but the height was so great, that I think

it is particularly mentioned by *Josephus*, as enough to cause one's head to turn round, or grow giddy to look down.

You think, "That the idea or belief of the word of God existing in print, or in writing, or in speech, is inconsistent in itself," &c. This is to represent the Deity as far weaker and more insufficient than man: we can cause our words to exist in speech, writing, or print, as we please; and if we were always to live, and retain our faculties, we could with ease preserve them for ever free from any material alterations. But to deny our Almighty Creator, the infinitely wise, powerful, and good God, to have sufficient ability to cause his word to be spoken, written, or printed, and to preserve it pure, would in itself excite laughter by its absurdity, did not the profaneness and blasphemy of it, excite detestation, and shock the serious mind. Who is the author of language; who taught man at first to write, read and understand? did not his Creator?

I have already proved, that the Bible is the word of God, existing in writing and print: it has been miraculously preserved hitherto, and it will remain to the end of time; and a few errors, whether of copyists, translators, or printers, no more hinder its being still the word of God, than the errors of the presses in the several editions of your *Age of Reason*, make it not to be your production.

It was never possible at any one time, for any material addition, suppression, or alteration to be made in the Bible, without being immediately detected; and as for fabricating the whole, which was written by different hands, from *Moses* down to *St. John*, during the space of near sixteen hundred years, from the year of the world 2512, the year that *Israel* came out of Egypt, till the year of our Lord 96, corresponding to the year of the world 4103, it is too absurd to think upon for a moment.

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The Bible is therefore the written existing word of God, in which we cannot be deceived ; it proclaimeth his power, it publisheth his wisdom, it manifests his goodness and beneficence. And it teaches us to imitate the moral goodness and beneficence of God towards all his creatures ; it forbids revenge, wrath, envy and malice, between man and man ; and teaches us to love one another, and to do good to all, even to our enemies, and to be kind, even to useful beasts. It gives us the highest proofs and hopes of immortality that we could even wish for. And thus in every respect, it bears evident marks of its divine original. The nations that have not had the Bible, or that do not read it, most disagree, have most redundancies in their religion, as well as most shocking deficiencies, and are generally idolators : this is strange and unaccountable, of the book of creation is preferable to the Bible to learn true religion from. When the knowledge, belief, love, and practice of the scriptures shall be universal, then shall all men be of one mind ; all shall reverence their Creator, and love one another. *The Lord shall be King over all the earth ; then there shall be one Lord, and his name One.* An universal religion shall then prevail ; *God will turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent.* See Zech. xiv. 9. Zech. iii. 9.

HAVING noticed the most material objections in your book, against the Christian system, and according to my small abilities, defended divine revelation against the ridicule (for I cannot call it argument) whereby you have sought to overthrow it, I now take my leave of you, and subscribe myself,

Your sincere friend, &c.

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